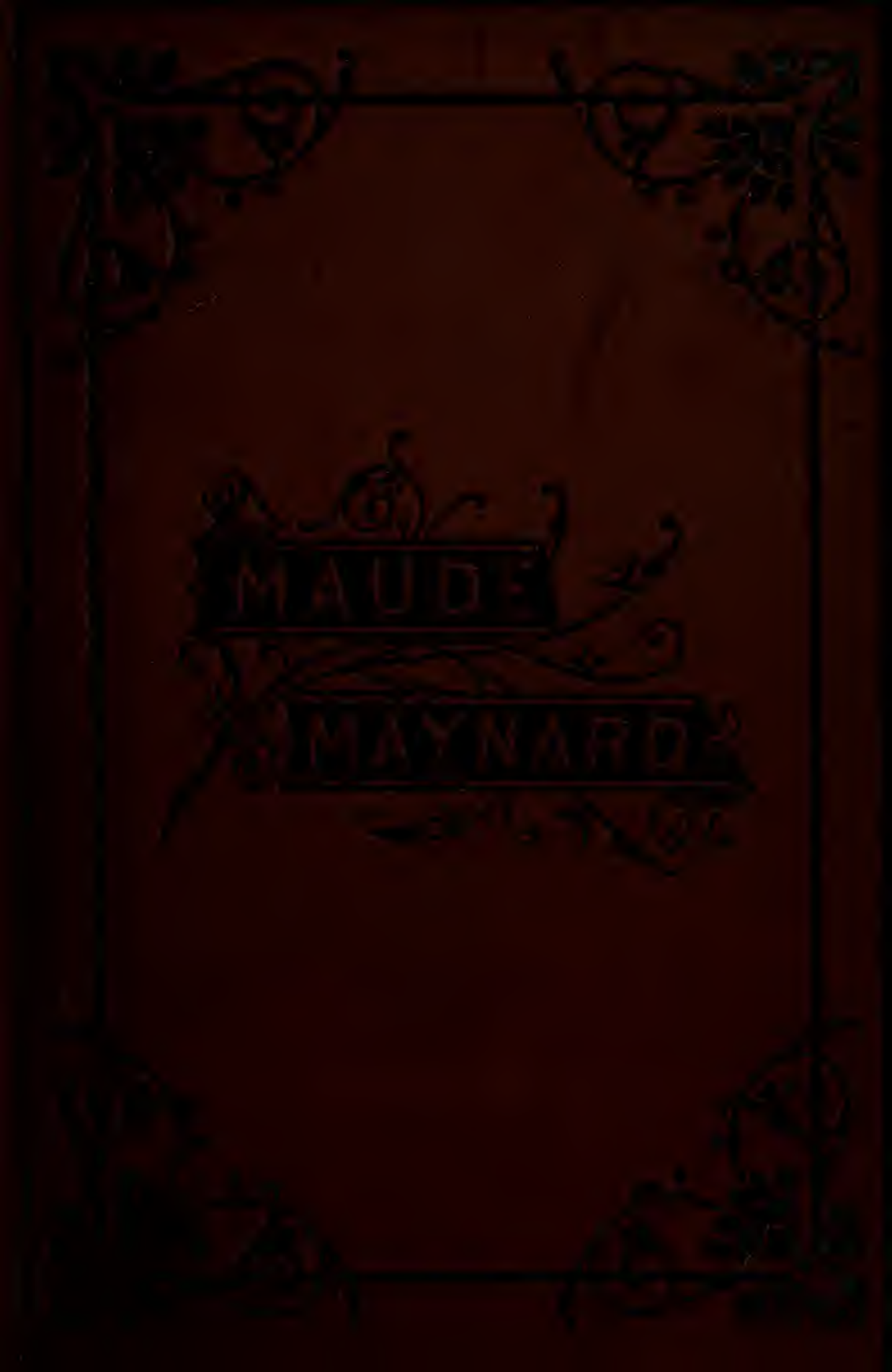
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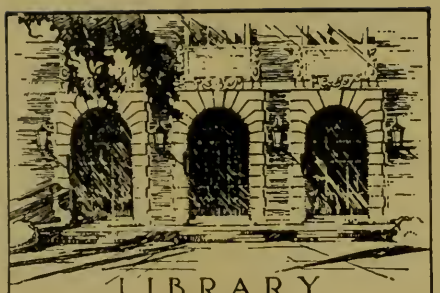

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MAUDE MAYNARD

VOL. III.

MAUDE MAYNARD

BY THE AUTHOR OF

'ALMOST FAULTLESS' 'A BOOK FOR GOVERNESSES

IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. III.

LONDON
SMITH, ELDER, & CO., 15 WATERLOO PLACE
1876

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MAUDE MAYNARD.

CHAPTER XXIX.

When that week came to an end, and Edgar was obliged to go back to the Grammar-School, I could not go with him. I was still utterly prostrate, as I had been ever since the necessity for keeping up was past. I was too weak to walk across the floor without help. When he was obliged to leave, Rawlins came to nurse me. I think Edgar must have given her some of his tenderness, for she waited upon me as if I had been her own child.

Edgar had to leave early in the morning. Where we were was an hour's journey by train from Mannerton. He was always

back by six, and then he had a quarter of an hour's walk to the house where we were lodging. His train was always punctual. What a heavenly set of directors and officials must have been at the head of the —— line! I used to know the very minute when Edgar would come. I listened for the click of the latch of that little gate, and then I heard his firm, ringing step crunching the pebbles of the garden walk. How I used to long to be able to go and meet him, and how I envied Rawlins, who always opened the door, and saw him first.

And then, the long winter evenings, with the crimson curtains of our sitting-room closely drawn, and the blazing fire flinging its wavy light on the white beams of the low, old-fashioned ceiling, and making strange, fantastic shapes on the wall, and the tea-table all ready, with what I like so much to see—a perfectly white, spotless cloth—and the pretty china and Edgar's arm-chair, with the slippers at the foot, waiting for him. I

used to watch Rawlins getting it all ready with the only discontented feeling I ever felt. I did so long to do it all myself, and at the end of another week I was able.

We had been at the cottage a fortnight when, for the first time, I opened the door for my husband. How pleasant it was to see his look of glad surprise! After that I grew stronger every day, and began to go out a little, and then I quickly got back strength and health. Then I began to do all the little things for Edgar which I could myself. Rawlins grew quite testy, but I did not care a bit for that. I used always to make up the fire, and brush up the hearth, between five and six o'clock, though Rawlins grumbled all the time about my 'dirtying myself' and 'blacking my hands to no purpose.' I wonder what she meant? I should think it was 'to some purpose,' when I made it look so beautiful for Edgar! And then I used to dust the room so that I am sure Aunt Gretta, with her new spectacles

on which she ordered from London, could not have seen a speck of dust anywhere. Ah, Aunt Gretta! dear Aunt Gretta!

And then, by-and-by, I managed to lay the tea-table all by myself. I am sure, though Rawlins looked so cross, she could not have done it better. Edgar said she could not have done it half so well; and I don't think she could. And Mrs. Hesketh, the landlady, would let me go in the kitchen and cut the bread and butter and make the toast, and she only laughed pleasantly sometimes, and said, 'it was all very well for a little time.' It was rather disagreeable of her to say so, as if it would not be just as delicious to do things for Edgar ten years hence as it is now. Rawlins used to mutter, she 'wished Miss Maude would let her do her own work,' but I didn't mind her. It is very inconsiderate of Rawlins to go on calling me 'Miss Maude.' I really wish she would not do it; she seems to forget that I am married, and that she ought to call me Mrs. Farren.

It will seem so absurd when we go back to Mannerton, because I am not 'Miss Maude' now. I am Edgar's wife. But Rawlins does not seem to think anything at all of that. She seems to have adopted a kind of nursish-taking-care way of me, and sometimes of Edgar too, as if we were a couple of children, and needed to be looked after. She seems to see after everything for Edgar as if she really doubted whether I were capable of doing it. Edgar only laughs, but I wish she would not, for I am getting quite strong and well now, and able to sit up all the evening and talk to Edgar—talk about the past and the future—and this is such a great relief!

And then it is so pleasant to hear all about himself, and all that he has had to battle with, and feel that it is all ended now! 'Till death us do part.' Those are such precious words! I like to say them over and over again: 'Till death us do part.'

Last night we were talking about the

evening I came to Mannerton and found him in his lodgings, and I asked him, as I looked round our room—the very picture of neatness and comfort—I asked him how he could bear to live in such a place as that house in Endane Street; and I remember how grave he looked, and he said: 'It was the result of wrong, Maude; it was a cowardly shrinking from the duties and obligations of life. I did not care what became of me or what I did. I lived because I was obliged to live, not because I ought to do it in the best way possible.'

'The best way possible,' I repeated.

'Yes,' he said; 'no trouble has a right to crush a man; it is a slave who is crushed, not a free man. So long as God gives him a duty to do—mind, not a pleasure to enjoy, but a duty to do—he ought to do it, bravely and well, defying sorrow to take the manhood out of him. But there I failed; and one small result was, as you saw, an utter disregard of that self-respect which every human being owes to himself.'

'I wonder, Edgar, how you could bear it,' I said, 'you are so very particular. Do you remember how beautiful the school-house was at Stonecross, and how perfectly in order was your every arrangement, from the senior school in the village to the row of cabbages in your kitchen-garden? I remember one of the first things which I noticed about the new schoolmaster was the perfect order and neatness of everything which he had to do with.'

'Yes,' he said; 'I did not know my little Maude noticed things so much.'

'And I remember thinking that your kindness must be even greater than your love of neatness, when I saw how you let little Bobbie rub his curly head in any kind of fashion over your coat on Sunday morning.'

He laughed at the remembrance, but I was very grave, for the thought of those Sundays always brought Gypsie to my remembrance.

Edgar guessed my thoughts. I knew he did, for he drew me still closer to him.

'Don't think of that, my darling,' he said; 'it will all come right in time; only be patient, and we shall have Gypsie with us some day—always with us. I feel sure we shall.'

'Oh, Edgar, do you think so?' I said.

'I feel sure of it,' he said. 'Somehow or other, Gypsie will be given to our earnest prayers and tender love. Heaven cannot long withstand these.'

'Dear little Gypsie!' I said, 'I cannot bear to think of his trouble; he will miss me so much!'

'I should have missed you more, Maude,' said my husband, gently.

Yes, I knew he would.

'Do you think we shall hear from Papa, Edgar?' I asked.

'I don't expect it,' he said; 'and I am not sure that I wish it. I know that if he did write, his letter would greatly pain us. No, I hope he will not write; it is better as it is.'

'I wonder if he will forgive us,' I said, musingly.

'I would not think about that, Maude; I think we can scarcely expect that he should do so. He will naturally be greatly incensed, and nothing will lead him to make any excuse for us; neither would anything we can do induce him to listen to us for a moment. And when we are quite sure we can do nothing towards altering a thing, the best plan is to put it from our thoughts altogether.'

'Dr. Vanny?' I said.

'I do not expect much from him either,' said Edgar, quietly, 'and you try not to, Maude.'

'But you don't know how good and kind he is,' I said; 'and he has great influence over Papa.'

'I do not doubt his goodness and kindness,' said Edgar, 'for I have proved them; but I very much doubt his influence with Dr. Maynard beyond a certain point, and this

matter lies beyond that point. When a man has strong belief in his own rectitude, and is utterly averse to admit that there can have been even an error in judgment in his conduct, much more that he has committed mistakes which have amounted to positive injustice and unkindness, it takes more than the influence of an old friend to show him things in their true light. Dr. Maynard is one of those men who find it terribly hard to forgive, and equally hard to blot out from their memories the remembrance of a wrong—the blackest dye of that wrong being that it is committed against themselves.'

I had never found time to tell Edgar what Aunt Louise had told me at Banton about Dr. Vanny, so I told him now.

'Poor Dr. Vanny!' he said, 'I felt sure from the first time I met him that there was a life-history hidden under his careless, half-bitter, half-satirical manner, and this was it!'

'Why did you not send your note to me

instead of to him, Edgar?' I said. 'Were you afraid I should come to you?'

'Such a thought as that you would do so, Maude, never came into my mind. I did not think that your love was of that stern stuff which would dare and endure all. I thought that you would live down your trouble, forget that you had ever had the misfortune to love me, and in time marry—perhaps Captain Marshall.'

'Edgar!' But Edgar would not let me leave him. 'This was the opinion you had of me, then! You believed that I loved you, and yet you thought that I could live it down, and marry someone else!'

'You would only have done, Maude, what ten out of every twelve do. It is rarely that a man or a woman loving one another, and bravely facing the truth, dare to be true—so true to themselves, that they cannot be false to any other. It is not one in a thousand who would have ventured everything as my wife has done. And Love, sometimes in my

graver moments, when I think of what your future may be, and of how unfitted you are for a poor man's wife, I ask myself whether it would not have been happier and better for you in the end, if you had left me to bear the burden alone.'

'Left you alone, Edgar! How dare you say so? Left you to the tender mercies of Mrs. Smith and Endane Street! Are you not ashamed to utter such words, when you look round on this bright, beautiful little nest of a room, and think of what your lodgings were, and when you have me instead of that odious chemical apparatus? You *ought* to be ashamed of yourself!'

But Edgar was very grave. '*Are* you happy, Maude? That is the question. I do not mean that; but will you be happy when we go back to Mannerton and have really to face actual life; when it comes to daily, practical matters; when you find out that you are really a poor man's wife, and cannot get on without managing and con-

triving, and that you are not among the class of people to whom you have been accustomed, and have to forego all the luxuries which hitherto have been the most ordinary matters to you? Think of the change, Maude. What if my love has brought my wife into cares and annoyances, from which I have no power to shield her, and she find out, too late, that she has made a great mistake?'

'Edgar,' I said, 'I have heard that the best of husbands can at times be as disagreeable as it is possible for men to be, and now I am proving it. I haven't the least, tiniest bit of patience with you! You are all in all to me, my husband; life would be but death without you; and I shall not fear death, if I may meet it at your side! There is not a good which I would not give up for you; there is not a suffering I would shrink from, if I might bear it with you; there is no lot I would not share with you! I have begun to pray again, since I was your wife,

Edgar, for there was no God in Heaven to me, away from you! Oh, my husband, do not tell me again that I have made a mistake!'

And for answer Edgar only took me closer into his arms, and I felt a hot tear fall on my face.

Then by-and-by we began to talk about the 'how, when, and where.' Before next half-year begins, we must go into lodgings in Mannerton, until we get a house; and though I shall regret to leave this place, I shall be glad for some things. I know that it must be much more expensive living here than living close to the School would be, and I long to be really settled and to begin to shape myself to my new life. All that Edgar has from the School is two hundred and fifty a year, and though he might have an increase of salary, this is all we shall have to live upon at present. And I mean to be *such* a manager. I shall make it go as far as double the sum. Then there is my fortune, which must come to

me, only I never like to mention this to Edgar. The only time I have seen him look cross was when I did mention it, and he said he hoped we should never see a penny of it. It is very foolish of Edgar, I think, to be so touchy about this matter. I wish it were three times as much for his sake. And I am afraid he really will not use it, unless I manage it somehow; he hinted as much that time I mentioned it to him. I suppose no one could prevent my money coming to me, for I was more than twenty-one when I was married, and it is in the hands of trustees. Papa is one of them, to be sure; still, I suppose he alone could not prevent me having it; Dr. Vanny is another, and I am sure he would never try. Papa, perhaps, may be able to throw obstacles in the way; and Edgar, I am sure, would never stir a finger to get a shilling of it.

When we were talking, I asked Edgar about Rawlins, and what she was going to do. 'To stay with us,' he said. 'I gave

her her choice. I told her that in your letter you had explained that she was in total ignorance of this matter, therefore she was quite free from blame ; and I offered her the option of returning to Stonecross or of remaining in lodgings until she met with a suitable place, or of remaining with you, of course arranging that we should provide all her expenses, whatever she chose.'

'And she chose to remain ?'

'She chose to come to you without the least hesitation. She said Miss Maude had been very ill, and wanted someone to look after her. Apparently, Maude, she doubts my capability of taking care of you, as much, as you say, she does yours of me. She said she would much rather stay with us, if we would keep her, than go anywhere else.'

'But did you tell her —— ?'

'I told her that we should be quite poor, that I was only a schoolmaster, and that she had better consider well before she decided, as she would find things very different to

what she had been accustomed at Stonecross. She told me, for reply, that she 'supposed if Miss Maude could do, she could;' so I was obliged to remind her of one little fact, that "Miss Maude" loved her husband, and therefore matters might not seem quite the same to her as they would to another.'

'And what did she say to that, Edgar?'

'An answer to which I could make no objection—"And I love Miss Maude, sir."'

'And she dared to compare the two! What did you say to her?'

'Told her I was very glad she had such a good reason, and the matter was settled. She went home for the week before she came to us here, and I am very glad that she is going to be with you, Maude. She will manage and arrange, and, I hope, spare my little wife many an anxiety. And it will be a great comfort to me to feel that when I have to leave you for so many hours a day, you will not be quite alone in that great town. Rawlins has given the very best

possible assurance for taking care of you—she loves you.'

'I wish she would not call me, "Miss Maude," Edgar.'

Edgar burst out laughing.

'Don't look so serious over it. I have no doubt she will alter in time. Shall I tell her you prefer "Mrs. Farren"?'

'I do prefer it,' I said, smiling, 'but you need not tell her so. I wonder she hasn't the sense to see it.'

'Perhaps she thinks the old name better than the new, Maude; it is not that you are at all wanting in personal dignity, don't think that. I have no doubt if she had lived with me before I was married, she would have continued to call me "Master Edgar," although I am six feet two.'

'Master Edgar!' It seemed so absurd, that I could not help laughing heartily.

'Do you know,' continued Edgar, 'that the Western Church identifies the "Madeleine," which the French nation have always

shown such reverence for, with the sister of Lazarus; and Maude, I like to think of you as being as loving and tender as she was. And you often remind me too of the church which bears your name. Serene in repose—when the sunlight falls through its windows and gilds the arabesque of its floors and lights up the glory of the aisles and cloisters and touches its inner sanctuary—its holiest of holies—with a yet more divine glory, every nook and corner is penetrated with radiance so bright, it seems scarcely of earth. That is just like my little Madeleine when the full tide of her love comes sweeping over her.'

And then I had to bring Edgar down from his absurdities by asking him what wages Rawlins was to have, what our house-rent would be, and what coals were a ton. But I was almost sorry when I had done this, and saw how the mention of these matters sent away all the smiles from his face and brought grave looks instead. I can't bear to

see Edgar look like that. I heartily wish we were settled in our own house, wherever it is to be, that I might begin at once to practise all my plans of management and economy. I am sure I can manage if only they will let me. But there is my difficulty. Between Edgar and Rawlins, I am afraid I shall not be able to get my own way at all. I can see quite well now that even the idea of my working and living as we shall have to do troubles Edgar. He could do as he did in those abominable lodgings, and never think about himself, but he is afraid of my having the least inconvenience.

I asked Edgar what Rawlins said that morning when he told her that we were married. 'Very little. I believe she guessed the truth when she saw me enter the room; and when I told her, woman-like, she began to cry. An event would not be an event to a woman, unless a few tears were sprinkled over it.'

'Edgar, you ought not to say so. I am sure I am not given to crying.'

'No, indeed. My little Maude is more given to acting, thank Heaven!'

'But it is not that I cannot cry, Edgar; it is that sharp suffering scorched up all my tears long ago. I could cry now, again; tears of happiness, Edgar, and not of trouble.'

'That time is past, Maude. God grant my wife may never shed any tears now but those of happiness! God grant her husband may never cause her any others!'

'You! Oh Edgar, you will never cause me to shed one tear of sorrow!'

'Ah, Maude! who knows?' he said. 'Do not be wilfully blind, lest your eyes should be suddenly opened. You may find out some day that I am very different from what you expect.'

'Whatever I find out, Edgar, I am your wife. The worst and the most miserable that I could discover would never alter that fact or make me love you less.'

'Would it not? Would no discovery lessen your faith in me, Maude? Think well.'

'I have no need to think, Edgar. Whatever you are or whatever you do, I shall love you through all; it must be a poor love which can only live in prosperity.'

'But sin, Maude, sin? If I sinned, you would not love me still?'

'I should not love you less, my husband. I hope I should not love the sin, but I should help you out of it, and try to save you from ever committing it again. But, Edgar, how silly you are! You have not sinned, and are not going to sin.'

'No, indeed,' he said. 'Heaven help me to keep my hands clean and my conscience pure, if only for my Maude's sake. God forbid that the shadow of a wrong should ever fall on her name!'

'It never will,' I said, 'unless I bring it there myself. But why do you talk in this way, Edgar?'

'Why indeed?' he said, rousing himself. 'Only to try and find out if Dr. Long's words were right when he told me, on my wedding-day, that he thought "steadfastness and faithfulness were written on your face."'

'Who is Dr. Long?' I asked.

'The head-master of the Grammar-School; the clergyman who married us, Maude, and my good friend.'

'I am so glad,' I said; 'I was sure you would make friends wherever you went.'

'I do not know about that,' he said; 'no man would wish to be friends with such a cynical dog as I have been since I came here. Oh, Maude! how different life will be now!'

'Who was the other gentleman?' I asked.

'What other?'

'The one who was there when—when ——'

'Oh, the "Pater." His name is Philips—a good fellow; one of the masters, and a man

who has taken a strange interest in me, considering what he is.'

'And yet you have no friends, Edgar?'

'Well, these two are exceptions. Philips is a character. Why he took to me I don't know. I am sure I was rude to him—perhaps that was the reason. He has had a disappointment, which has tinged all his life with melancholy, and which he trys to hide under a brusque exterior, an expressed contempt of everything and everybody, and a real appreciation of the good and right. He makes himself out to be the worst fellow llving, while he is, in reality, one of the best. You will like him, when you know him thoroughly, Maude.'

'And Dr. Long?'

Edgar's face brightened. 'He is every inch a man, a gentleman, and a Christian. He is an accomplished scholar, a profound thinker, a successful writer, and an appreciated benefactor. Dr. Long is one of those "good men" for whom some would even

"dare to die"; one of those men to whom Heaven seems to have granted the rare distinction of a life of success and an exemption from the curse which such a life often brings. He is as simple as a child; he wears his genius without a shadow of assumption, and his successes without a particle of arrogance. And he is as distinguished in his appearance as he is in his mental and moral qualities; his countenance is but the reflex of the inner man. He will be made a Bishop, then an Archbishop, and still wear his dignities with the same divine humbleness, until he pass into the Presence from whence he has gathered the power which has moulded him here. I almost think he seems ready for that Presence now, so holy is his life, so perfect his character.'

I had never seen Edgar so enthusiastic. I do like to see one man admire and appreciate another without any of those miserable little jealousies which almost invariably mar a woman's admiration of another woman;

there was not a 'but' in the whole of Edgar's eulogium of Dr. Long.

'And this man is your friend, Edgar?'

'He is. But why, I cannot tell. He took an interest in me from the first. Had it not been for his kindness and influence I could not have got my present situation. And he has found me out in Endane Street, and has often come to me there when he could not prevail on me to go to his house. His influence was always used to rouse me and do me good, and it would have done, only I was coward enough to succumb again.'

'Did he know all about me, Edgar?'

'You need not blush so tremendously, Maude. I told you Dr. Long was a gentleman, and on going to him *that* evening and frankly telling him that I had sufficient reasons for wishing for perfect secresy, he not only supplied me with all the necessary formula, but voluntarily pressed upon me a week's holiday, at a time when I should never have thought of asking for it, for we

are very full of work before the Christmas vacation. He took upon himself what part of my work he had time for, and arranged about the rest being done by another master.'

'How good of him!' I exclaimed. 'And Mr. Philips?'

'Neither did Philips say anything beyond a quizzical question or two, which will not affect either of us in the least.'

And now I must put my pen down. I have been writing all day and a great deal of yesterday. It will soon be time for Edgar to be here. He said he should try and make time to-day to see about a house which he thinks might suit us. If I could only persuade him that the smallest will do! I am afraid that he will take a larger one than he ought, and then the furnishing will cost more. Edgar has some money saved from his salary before he came here, which will go a long way towards furnishing, so we shall do quite well for the present, and when my

money comes, which it *shall* do, then we shall manage nicely.

We are not going to Mannerton until just before the fresh session at the school begins. We are to spend all the holidays in the country; I think we shall always love this little place. I should like to come here every summer and be in the same house again. Our holidays begin to-morrow. *Our* holidays! Edgar is like a child in his exuberance of joy in looking forward to them and his anticipation of our keeping Christmas together. What a happy six weeks it will be! There, how silly I am! I told Edgar only last night that I did not cry, and now, hot tears are blistering my book! I will write no more, for Edgar will be here directly.

CHAPTER XXX.

Thursday, March 10.

THE first time I have sat down to write in my own house! my home, *our* home! Ah! that little word, *our*, instead of *my*: how pleasant it is!

Christmas has come and gone. Edgar's holidays are over, but our house is not far from the School, and he is able to come home to dinner. It was this that made us decide at last upon this house, though Edgar did not like it, and said he was sure I could not do without some green fields or trees to look out upon. But I could not expect to have them in Mannerton. To be sure, a dingy wall is not so pleasant as trees and fields. Nor is a row of red houses opposite, with

tiny bits of miserable gardens in front, which look as if a perpetual blight had fallen on them, so nice as a smooth green lawn and flower-beds. But then inside—it is all light and brightness there. I never think of the outside now.

We have two sitting-rooms; one I call Edgar's room. He never will admit the title; but I like to think it is his, and to arrange all his things as I know he likes to have them; his books and papers; his compositions and translations; his telescope, microscope, and his specimens, and, oh! that disagreeable chemical apparatus—it really *is* disagreeable, it is no use pretending to like it. And those bottles which emit such horrid odours whenever Edgar takes the corks out. However, I try not to smell them, and if I do, I say it's delightful, and it is very rarely that Edgar touches them now, only I like to keep them all dusted and ready for him if he should want them.

This is our favourite room. Winter

though it is, we always manage to have some plants or flowers here. Then I have a beautiful fernery, and the other day Edgar brought me home a Christmas rose-tree, all in bloom; rich, deep, crimson roses; and sometimes he brings me a white camellia; but that is very extravagant of him, and makes me very angry, only being angry never seems to make any difference. Then I have a canary, which never seems to mind the brick wall opposite, but sings as if he were in his own island home on the broad Atlantic; and two little love-birds, who twitter and chirp all day long to each other. Mr. Philips wanted to buy these the other evening when he was here, and offered Edgar a large sum for them, but Edgar only laughed, and said he could not part with them at any price, as they were great pets of his wife's, and Mr. Philips told him he was a 'conceited puppy' to talk about his wife as if he were the only man in the world who had one. Mr. Philips does say queer things,

but still, I like him very much. He often reminds me of Dr. Vanny. He has been here several times, and is teaching me to play at chess. He says he can do that a great deal better than Edgar can. I am sure he cannot, but then it amuses him, and he has no happy home to go to like ours; I tell Edgar so, when he sometimes wishes he would not come, and then Edgar says no more.

Dr. Long and his wife have called more than once and I think he is all that Edgar said he was. I like Mrs. Long very much; she has twice taken me out a drive in her carriage; it was very kind, only I would much rather have been left at home. I did not at all like the idea of driving out in a carriage whilst Edgar was working for me at the School, but he was so pleased when I told him, that I did not say how much I disliked it. I hope Mrs. Long will not ask me to go again. My carriage days are over, and driving out always brings back the old

life so vividly to me that I hope I shall never drive out again. And this reminds me that I have had some letters from Stonecross, and one from Aunt Louise. Two came from Stonecross one morning. Papa's letter was in reply to the one Edgar wrote to him, and it came to us during our holidays, when we were in the country; mine was from Aunt Gretta. I do not know what was in Papa's letter, and never shall, for Edgar would not let me see it; he burnt it the moment he had read it, and I cannot persuade him to tell me what was in it—perhaps it is as well.

The other letter was from Aunt Gretta, and I did not know then, and do not know now, whether to laugh or cry over it. Poor Aunt Gretta! she cannot be very angry, it is not in her nature. She said that Papa had desired her to send me all my things, and then hold no further communication with me; but, she could not help writing to tell me to be sure and 'air my dresses before I wore

them, because, being sent so far by luggage train that very cold weather, they would be sure to be very damp.' And then she went on from one thing to another, till her letter filled five sheets before it was done! But she said so little about Gypsie, and that little has made me very unhappy. I am sure, from what she says, that Gypsie is not well. Does he long for me? does my little Gypsie want 'Sister Maude?' I thought *I* wanted nothing in this world, but if I might see you once again!

And I have had a letter too from Aunt Louise. Here it is in the leaves of my book, where from a child I have always put any letters I wished to keep. I got it on Christmas-day:

'Banton, December 24.

'My very dear Child,—For Maude you *are* very dear to me—my own sister's child! You are very dear to me, though this does not blind me to the fact that you have done

wrong—very wrong, I think. Do not think me hard. I have lived many years longer in the world than you have; and Maude, I think you should have trusted your life with Heaven, and patiently waited. I know it was hard; I know something of what your life was at home, and I know how much you loved; still Maude, I think it was wrong; it would have been braver, more patient, worthier, to wait and suffer even unto the end, than do wrong. I think so, but I will not judge you. God knows all, and He is full of pity and love. To Him and to His keeping, I commit you, my child.

'I should like to know your husband. I trust some day I shall, for if you will have me, I hope to come and see you. Will Mr. Farren invite me?

'I have not the least doubt that you are very, very happy. I have no doubt that, just now, life is a perfect Eden to both you and your husband; but, Maude, *it cannot last*, mind that. *This* will come to an end, and

what remains may be more real. God grant it may! You will have to find out that Life is not Love; that Earth is not Enjoyment; that Home and Happiness—in their full meaning—are only found in Heaven. You will have to learn that a cross meekly borne, that patience, hope, and quiet enduring—in one word—Christ-likedness—can only come through pain; and that *that* should come is the end of living. By whatever means it come to you, God help you to accept it patiently, to bear it humbly, and to come out of it triumphantly. You will have to suffer, Maude; —Christ be with you in the suffering.

'My child, I love you dearly, and I love your husband for your sake. I pray for you both daily. As I said, I shall come and see you some day—my own sister's child!

'And now, Maude, remember, if the time should ever come when you want a friend, you have one always in

'Aunt Louise.'

What a strange letter it is! I cannot understand it quite. Edgar looked so grave over it; I don't much like it. I believe Edgar would have been really vexed, but the love for me which runs through the whole of it softened him. We read it together, and his face showed such a complication of feelings, that I could not understand it any more than the letter.

'If she come to see us, Edgar,' I said, 'then she will understand all, and know that I did quite right;' and he only answered, 'I shall be happy to see her at any time,' and that was so stiff and unlike Edgar. But when he saw that I looked grieved, he took me in his arms and kissed the look away.

'I am only sorry,' he said, 'that she talks about my wife suffering. Why should she say so?'

'Why indeed?' I said. 'I shall never suffer a moment's sorrow, Edgar, if only you love me through everything!'

And I shall not. I fear nothing if only I keep my husband's love.

So I have put Aunt Louise's letter away, and it will be among the 'things which were.'

I am glad she has written, though; it is pleasant to feel that she has not cast me off.

Aunt Gretta says in her letter that Papa has positively forbidden Maggie being engaged to Captain Snuffins, and that Maggie is very angry with me, for she says that it is all my fault, and she does not believe that Papa will ever let her get married at all now. Better so! Love is blind, I know, but he must be *very* blind indeed if she can love that creature. One little sentence in Aunt Gretta's letter shows me the state of things at home. I expected it, yet—yet, it seems rather hard. She writes:—'Oh Maude! how could you do such a dreadful thing? The Maynards' name has never had a stain upon it; it has always been a noble name from the time of the Crusaders; and now, *you have married a schoolmaster!*' Horror of horrors!

Not that I have left home and disobeyed my father—that is not the sin, but that I have 'married a schoolmaster!' Perhaps Aunt Gretta, after all, those Crusaders were ignorant old fellows, and would have been all the better if a 'poor schoolmaster' had claimed relationship with them and made them a little more like himself! Men—men made in God's image, do not think now-a-days that worth and nobleness are proved only by spilling the blood of their fellow-men, or testing their love for women by slaying their rivals in deadly fight. Never mind, Aunt Gretta, though your niece *has* married a 'schoolmaster'—

> "Both heirs to some six feet of sod,
> Are equal in the earth at last;
> Both children of the same dear God."

The end of Aunt Gretta's letter, as a composition, is worth transcribing:—'Your Papa and Mr. Retnor and Charlotte have desired that your name may never again be mentioned in their presence; and I am sure,

Maude, it was very wrong of you to go such a long journey in such a month as November; your feet would be as cold as ice before you reached the end. I hope you changed your stockings, but of course you would not, you never think of such things. Oh dear! oh dear! and all your Papa's hopes centre now in Gypsie; he is heir to all and his name too, though of course, poor child, you could have made no difference in that matter; whoever you had married, you would have had to change your name; it is fortunate for Gypsie, that your Papa's only brother has no child, it will make him so very wealthy; and I am sure I hope he will marry someone of good name and family and equal to himself, if it be only to please your Papa, for he is fonder of him than ever, and never lets him be away from him an hour at a time; though I don't mean that Edgar Farren is not a nice name, you know my dear, just the name of course, much better, as poor Maggie says, than if it had been John Smith or Richard Jones. Oh,

Maude! What would have become of us if you had married a John Smith! and you might have done, for you were always such a girl, you never cared for anything at all in that way; and I do hope he is not consumptive, but I very much doubt it, he always had such a colour, and I hope he wears flannel.'

I wonder what poor 'schoolmaster' taught Aunt Gretta the art of composition? I have put in all the stops; there is not one in hers, from beginning to end.

And so, Gypsie, I am never to see you again! You will grow up and have a name, aye, and make a name too! for I know my Gypsie will be, what Edgar says Dr. Long is—a man, for whom some would 'even dare to die,' and I shall never see you! never look again into those dear eyes and read there what the little lips so often uttered,—'Sister Maude, I *do* love you.' You will never know that Maude 'loved' *you*; and that your name was written on her heart and bound up

with her life so closely—so very closely—that only one other could ever have made her leave her Gypsie! Your children will never say, 'Aunt Maude;' I shall never see over again in their faces what my little Gypsie was, when I last saw him. Oh, Gypsie, Gypsie! there is a great gulf between you and me, a gulf which can never be bridged over! Can it not? Last Sunday morning, at church, Dr. Long read the words—how they struck me! —'Is anything too hard for the Lord?' and again, in another part of the service, 'With God, all things are possible.' *All* things! then it is not impossible that I shall see my Gypsie again. But Dr. Long does not know that I am not a Christian, only trying to live my very best, and praying a little every day, because—because I am Edgar's wife.

CHAPTER XXXI.

Monday, August 15.

I CAN scarcely believe, in bringing out my old book, that six months have passed since I wrote in it! Six happy months! I remember when one day seemed too long to live through, too long in prospect and longer still in reality, and now——! When I look back it seems like a dream, only, thank God, no awaking!

How could I write when I should only have had to repeat one thing—that I was happy? And then, as I always say everything to Edgar, there is no occasion to write. He is my book now; the one from which I learn everything and to which I tell everything.

Let me try to think if anything has happened in the shape of an event which I can put down. Nothing, I think; one calm, unbroken, even flow. Aunt Louise, how could you prophesy that I should 'have to suffer' and that 'I should find out that Life is not all Love'? Aunt Louise, you were mistaken for once in your life.

The days have passed so quietly, that there is really nothing to tell. I have had a hundred things to do all day long. Edgar says I am the best little housekeeper in England, and I do think that I am a little bit a good one; but then it is Rawlins who has been so good in helping me and teaching me, though I think, too, that I have tried to learn, because, at first, Rawlins really was a little disagreeable. I know it was all her wish to save me trouble, but I wish she could have seen what I never could succeed in showing her, that it was no trouble to do all for Edgar. I soon found that I could not do all I wanted to, without grieving her, so I

had to give up some things, and the others I was resolved upon, and so got my own way. She used to say it was a 'pity if she couldn't manage a little bit of a place like this;' and once, when I had vexed her, I actually heard her mutter that she 'could put it all in her pocket, and its master and mistress too.' I really did not think that Rawlins could have been so rude; I thought it best to take no notice, and Edgar only laughed when I told him, and said it was much better to let little things pass. And Rawlins really has been very good and taken such care of me, that Edgar says she is worth her weight in gold. And I am very glad that I have had her, for I am sure Edgar would have been exceedingly uncomfortable, just at first, until I had learnt a little more. For when we came here, and were settled in our own house, I found I really did know nothing about housekeeping, and had not the least idea how things ought to be done. I do not know what I should have

done without her, and now, thanks to her teaching, I do not think I need be quite dependent on anyone again.

So I have generally spent my mornings about my house and in keeping everything in beautiful order in Edgar's room. Then I have always gone with Edgar both morning and afternoon as far as the street where the Grammar School is—never into the street, because I did not want the boys or any of the masters to see me—perhaps they would have thought it silly, and they don't know anything at all about it! And I generally go to meet Edgar too, so the time soon passes when he is away. I have done a great deal of sewing too—yes, a great deal. I am sure even Aunt Gretta would think so, though of course Rawlins has done a great deal more. She has made quite a stock of household linen. Then I always read, at least, one hour in the day; books which Edgar chooses for me, and in the evenings we sometimes read German together; and then Edgar is

so fond of music, that I cannot now regret that he bought me a piano. He did it without my knowledge, and I was very sorry at the time, because I don't think that we could afford it; but really it is such a pleasure to him, that I am not sorry now. Then I am taking up my Latin again to please Edgar, and he is my teacher.

Now it is our holidays, and we are in the country, lodging at Sanford, in the same house where we spent the first month after our marriage and our Christmas holidays. Edgar did this without my knowledge too, for I should have been afraid of the expense, but I could not help an exclamation of delight when he told me; so it is of no use pretending to be sorry now. It is so lovely! Oh, the delight of being in the country again! of exchanging brick walls and smoky chimneys for green fields, daised meadows, blue skies, and wind-swept trees; of hearing the birds sing and watching the lark mount up to heaven, from that green field opposite

my window, with his wings all 'dipt in dew!' Oh, the joy of watching the sunset with Edgar, and walking with him in those lanes and woods; and then, crossing the bridge and following the brook home and seeing its waters all silvered in the moonlight, not so picturesque perhaps as our brook—Gypsie's and mine—at Stonecross, but to me, how much more beautiful! for Edgar is always with me here, and the babble of this brook tells only of peace, while at Stonecross it spoke of—no, I never think of those days; Edgar made me promise I would not.

And so it is very delightful and very happy, only I am afraid it is a great expense. I wonder how Edgar manages it; he takes the charge of all money matters. He says I shall not be troubled about them, but I think I ought to be, and save him the trouble. I am sure he must have enough to try him, working so hard in that School all the day. I am very glad that I have always managed

exactly on the sum which he gives me for housekeeping. I was determined I would, and, more than that, I have never run a penny into debt. I know Edgar has such a horror of our running into debt. But I wonder how he does, for it seems to me that what I have must be a great part of his income; and then there are all other expenses, for I pay for nothing but just the simple weekly housekeeping. But whenever I ask Edgar, he only says: 'It is all right, little wife, never trouble your head, and keep all wrinkles from your brow, and we shall do.' It is very pleasant to think that it is all safe in his hands. And I fancy that Edgar expects his salary will be raised soon, but then it won't do to build on that. One thing I am quite determined upon: if I hear nothing about my money when we have been married a year, I shall write either to Aunt Louise or Dr. Vanny. I shall dare—yes, I shall dare my husband's anger. I know he cannot be angry with me long, and it is for his sake.

Why should he not have the benefit of my money? It is a great, cruel shame! No one has any right to keep it from me. It is my own, as Mamma's daughter. I wonder at Dr. Vanny. Papa—no, I have no right to say anything about him, for he is justly offended. I have found out that Dr. Long knew Papa and Mamma. He has spent several evenings with us, and one night he accidentally, through some mention of my name, found out who I was. He said a few things about Papa, in admiration of his learning and matters of that kind, but he soon changed the subject. I think he must have guessed something of the truth, for he has never said a word to Edgar about it. I am glad he has not ceased to be kind to Edgar because he has married me. Perhaps, if he knew all, and what I have done, he would not come to see us.

I must try and make an entry in my book now and then, two or three times a year, or I shall forget the look of my old friend. It is

the first time I have been alone since we came here. I was to have gone with Edgar this afternoon, but I was not well enough. I have had such hard work to make him go; he had arranged for a fishing excursion, and it would never have done to disappoint Mr. Philips, who was going with us. I believe they are coming back now; yes, I can see them just turning into the meadow. How pleasant it is to be able to lie here with the window open and see Edgar such a long way off! There, I have lost sight of them; they have gone into another meadow. Now I can see them again; I can see Edgar's fishing-line and basket of trout slung over his shoulder, and I can hear him whistling. Mr. Philips must be in one of his taciturn moods, for I have noticed when he is, Edgar always begins to whistle,—I suppose to relieve Mr. Philips from all obligation to talk. I know what he is whistling. I can catch the tune even here, and I know the words—

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'Twas the daintiest hand in all lady-land,
And she was but a poor man's wife;
Oh! but little ye'd think how that wee white hand
Could dare i' the battle of life!

Monday, October 3.

At home again. But that two months in the country was a real, tangible good—a something of which even the remembrance is a blessing. I can close my eyes now, and fancy I see again the tall, waving grass, and feel the air, fresh and sweet from the fields, and hear the hum of summer insects. Yes, it was a very blessed, happy time for us both, and has not made us the least discontented with our little town-home and work. I do hope that some day Edgar will be a rich man, and we shall live in the beautiful, fresh green country all our lives long, summer and winter; but wherever we are, it will be summer in our lives; we cannot know any winter.

Edgar has gone to dine at Dr. Long's

this evening. Dr. Long has asked us several times, but I could not go, and Edgar never would. He would not have gone to-night, only Dr. Long told him that he wished to see him on private business, so I told Edgar that he must go for my sake, because, perhaps he was going to have his salary raised. I wish it may be so; but I do not think it is, for there has been a disagreeable lawsuit going on about some property connected with the School; and though the trustees have won the suit, Edgar says the expenses connected with it have very much crippled the School funds.

I have a trouble. It seems so strange to write that, but it is true—a very great trouble. I have had a letter from Aunt Gretta, and I feel sure that her reason for writing was, that Gypsie was not well. She never mentions Papa or any of them, but just to say that Papa feels just the same about me, and that my name is never mentioned in the family;—'but,' she says, 'Gypsie is always

begging her to talk about "Sister Maude."' Oh Gypsie, my Gypsie! I must see you again—I must! When I am well again, I will beg Edgar to let me go to Stonecross, even if I dress as a beggar and wait at the gate to catch one glimpse of my darling! Why did Aunt Gretta write? It could do no good, for she says I must not attempt to write, even to Gypsie; she is sure Papa would put the letter in the fire without opening it. She says she thinks he is more angry now with me than he was at the first, or else 'his fears for Gypsie have made him more irritable.' 'His fears!' What can Aunt Gretta mean? She writes some of her confused sentences which it is impossible to make any sense of, and which I cannot understand. I wish she would not write at all, rather than write in that way. And Edgar looked so pained when he read the letter. I will not think about it, I promised him I would not.

Edgar has just been in to say 'Good-bye.' He says that he shall read all I have been

writing when he comes back, so I am to take care what I put. I wonder if many men look like my husband looked just now. I don't mean that he does not always look handsome, even in his ordinary school dress, but to-night, dressed for dinner, he did look ——. Sometimes lately, I have thought—I wonder if it has only been my fancy, or if it really is so—I have thought that Edgar has looked harassed and careworn. I don't know that it is exactly that, but as if he were thinking of something which I do not know of, and when I have asked him he has always thrown it off and said, with a smile, 'Nothing, my little wife, nothing.'

But I feel sure there *is* something; and I think it must be something about money matters; I feel quite sure that our expenses this year must have been beyond Edgar's income, for he is always getting me something which is the very thing I should like to have—and yet, I could have done without it. Edgar does not like me to miss things which he

knows I have been accustomed to, and I cannot bear to look grieved about it when it is for me he has done it.

Suppose—suppose I should not get over this month! What then? Suppose I should have to leave Edgar alone in this hard world! alone, after all I have dared and done for him! alone, after all our love! alone, with only the remembrance of our happiness to haunt and mock and curse him! Merciful Heaven! it cannot be; God cannot be so cruel! And yet, I have no right to expect God will hear me, whose only religion is a few words repeated night and morning, just that Edgar's wife may not seem a perfect heathen. No, I have no right to ask it. And yet, Death is a fact—and this awful fact may separate us. Grim and ghastly, it may come into our home, and neither our happiness nor our love, nor our prayers, nor our tears may stay it. Why am I writing like this to-night? I must be nervous; but I will not give way to foolish fancies. I defy them; for Edgar's

sake I will not be weak. Yes, I defy anything to come between me and my husband! nothing *shall* separate, nothing *shall* come between us!

One thing puzzles me. I used to think—when I had made up my mind to come to Edgar—I used to think that it would be very easy to be good and religious when I was his wife; but I think that there is some difference in this matter about Edgar lately. I don't know how it was, but at Stonecross, whenever I talked to him, before we finished he nearly always had said something, directly or indirectly, about these matters; now, he never does. It is impossible not to perceive the change, although I can't say that I am sorry for it. We always go to church on Sunday morning, and Edgar thinks that quite enough. I suppose it is, only I know he did not think so once. And then, I know quite well, that at Stonecross he would not have spent the rest of the Sunday as he does now. But it

is very pleasant to have him all the rest of the Sunday to myself, and to hear him read aloud. I wonder if he has altered his choice of Sunday reading to suit me. I know he used to be so very particular as to what books he read on Sunday. I remember him once saying that Sunday was the key-note to all the week, and that all the week was what Sunday made it. I think he must have altered very much in some of his notions, for he reads to me not only poetry and articles out of 'The Times' and 'Saturday Review,' but novels. Of course, I mean good novels, Edgar never reads the trashy ones.

Lately, we have not gone to hear Dr. Long on Sunday mornings, but have gone to another church. Edgar wished it, and it made no matter to me where I went so long as I was with him. When I asked Edgar why he had left Dr. Long's church, he said he did not like his preaching, for he really preached so 'at a man, it was quite uncomfortable.' I remember one day Edgar saying

the thing he admired so much in Dr. Long's preaching was, that with all his genius and fire 'it was so eminently practical.' He must have altered very much in his views about him.

He is doing some business for Dr. Long now; something about a brother, a very wild young man, who got into great debt and had to leave the country. I think Dr. Long is trying to help him, and as Edgar has an old friend in Australia, he asked Edgar to get his friend to make enquiries about him. Dr. Long wants to find out how he is going on, before he sends money to him. At least, this is what I understood from Edgar, but he said very little about it, as Dr. Long wishes it to be kept a secret. The father disowned him, I believe, but Edgar says that Dr. Long paid, and is now paying off his debts. I am glad he is using Edgar in this matter, because it shows what perfect confidence he has in my husband.

I don't think I must write any more. I

promised Edgar I would not write to tire myself. I wonder when I shall write again in my book—or—if ever? Supposing—no, I will *not* suppose. *That* is all dark to me. I can only feel as the German of Bürger has it:—

> 'O mother, mother, what is Heaven?
> O mother, what is Hell?
> To be with Wilhelm—that's my Heaven:
> Without him—that's my Hell.'

But the future, the future is so strange! To think that I—so careless, so wrong, once so bitter, that I should have a little child! my very own! Edgar's and mine! To put its tiny hands in my face, and nestle in my bosom; to coo with its gentle voice and look with its deep eyes into mine; to breathe softly by me at night and wake up to say 'Mamma!' to patter by my side and watch at the window for 'Papa' coming home, and clap its tiny hands when it sees him. Mine! ours! with its father's eyes, his smile and his very look of love. I hope it will be like him, not like me, and if I should——

CHAPTER XXXII.

Thursday, November 17.

The anniversary of our wedding-day. I must write a little to-day. I will try and write once a week, for Edgar will be away two evenings a week now until Christmas, doing extra work at the school. I am up again now, and well, and beside me—*something* sleeping in this beautiful *berceau-de-nette.*

Edgar has not been quite well lately. He will not admit it, and says it is nothing and he is well, but I am quite sure he is not. I cannot be deceived, and there has been something about him ever since I began to recover which is not like himself, and I am growing quite anxious. I want him to see a doctor, but he is almost angry with me when I

mention that. Not *really* angry ; Edgar has never been that with me ; this is something to write on the anniversary of my wedding-day, that I have never known a cold look or an angry word from my husband during the year. And these last six weeks, how much he has had to try him ! No wonder that he looks pale and worn now ; no wonder I see him altered. And yet through all —'O Douglas, Douglas, tender and true !'

For I have been very ill. At one time my life was despaired of. I cannot remember much about that time. It was only the day after the date of my last entry. When I came back to life, I saw my husband's face was blanched, and some, yes—I soon found them out—some bright silver hairs in the brown curly locks. You suffered more than I did, Edgar ! I had but to look into your face to see that ! And even when I was pronounced quite out of danger Edgar did not lose his troubled, careworn looks. And it seemed so dreadful to have to lie there and

see him look so troubled. And how pleasant they tried to make it for me! It seemed as if I had every luxury that money could buy, and I had one of the best nurses that could be got, and everything in my room to make it pleasant,—always some beautiful flowers. Where did Edgar get the money from; how could he manage it? I often used to wonder at this, and I wonder now.

The days did not seem so long when I was able to sit up a little and have baby myself. My baby—ours,—Edgar's and mine; our Gypsie. We are going to call him that. From the first time I was able to notice it, I was sure he was like my Gypsie, and Edgar does not contradict me in this fancy, if it be a fancy. I should have liked Dr. Long to baptise him, but for some unaccountable reason, Edgar will not hear of it. I cannot think what his reason can possibly be. He actually said that he 'would rather not have the child baptised at all than that Dr. Long should do it; in fact,

he thought it did not matter much, if he were not baptised; we could call him "Gypsie" just the same.' I think I never was so astonished in my life. Not have our baby baptised! Edgar could not know what he was saying. If Papa had heard him! How strange it is that men—both religious men—should hold such different views on the same point! I remember when Papa was preaching a series of sermons on the Sacraments at Stonecross, he began by saying, that baptism was the 'very gate of Heaven, by which, if any man entered in, he should be saved;' and now Edgar says it does not matter whether baby be baptised or not!

And Mrs. Long has been so kind to me during my illness. She called several times. I wish I might have seen her, but Edgar would not let me; I suppose he thought it better for me that I should not. She often sent me nice little presents too; but somehow, I fancy Edgar did not like it. I don't know what makes me think that, except,

perhaps, that quick consciousness one always has about those one loves very much; but I had it so strongly, that I was coward enough not to show him the present she sent for baby the other day.

Baby is so good and sleeps so quietly, that he has left me plenty of time this evening to write. He has his father's own beautiful brown eyes. I showed them to Edgar one day and said so, but Edgar—I don't know what it is, I can't exactly explain it or define the feeling, but there is a something—a something which is not quite as I thought it would be. And yet it is not that Edgar does not love his child! Oh no, it is not that! How well I remember one evening, when I was getting better and Edgar had been reading to me,—it was a German play I think, in which a son had been trying to dissuade a father from committing some great crime; pleading with him in passionate appeals; and Edgar thought I had fallen asleep, for he shut the book, and sat thinking;

and baby stirred in his cot, and Edgar went to him to try and quiet him without awaking me, for I opened my eyes and saw him bend over the child, and say something gentle. I did not move or speak, for I love to see Edgar do that; and then baby was quiet, and Edgar stood by him, and I was just going to speak to him, when all at once, and as it seemed by some irresistible impulse, he flung himself down on his knees by the cot, and buried his face in his hands, and I think—nay, I am sure he was sobbing; —a smothered, choking sob, far beyond all tears. Rawlins knocked at the door the next minute, and while she was speaking to me, Edgar slipped out.

I felt so confused at the time, that I really doubted whether I had heard and seen aright, or whether I had not been dreaming. And yet, the more I think of it the more I am sure I was not. I have never in my life shrunk from asking Edgar anything before now, but I cannot tell why I do not like to

mention this, because he thought I was asleep. How could I think he did not love baby as much as he ought! It was enough to see his face as he looked down on his child. There, baby is beginning to move now; he has opened his eyes so I must lay down my pen and take him up, the 'little hindering thing.'

Tuesday, December 13.

I did not think Dr. Vanny could put me away without a word; Dr. Vanny who loved Mamma! And yet my faith in him was beginning to waver. I have thought about him so much during these long evenings when Edgar is at the School—evenings that would have been long but for baby!

Yesterday afternoon I was sitting in our room—Edgar's room I always call it—when a very slight knock came at the door, and before I could speak, it was thrown open, and in walked Dr. Vanny! He came in without a word of notice or warning, just as

if he had been accustomed to walk in every afternoon of his life for the past year ; nodded to me with, ' How are you, Maude ? ' sat down in Edgar's own easy chair, which I had put by the fire ready for him, and his slippers too, for it was nearly time for him to be home from school, leant comfortably back, and then, looking at the slippers, said, ' What a pretty pattern ! Where did you get it from, Maude ? '

The whole scene,—his sudden appearance and his cool manner, struck me as so ludicrous that I could not resist a hearty fit of laughter, and then—I suppose it was very silly, but I could not help it—I began to cry.

' Well ! ' he said, taking his eye-glass out and looking at me very deliberately, ' if you aren't the queerest girl I ever knew ! What on earth do you first laugh and then cry for ? Are these your manners to an old friend ? '

' Dr. Vanny,' I said, ' how is Gypsie ? '

' What's in there ? ' was all his answer, as he pointed with his thumb to baby's pretty

berceau-de-nette, cosily put in the corner by the fire.

There was so much cool contempt in his tone that I felt quite indignant. As if he did not know what was 'in there!'

'You know quite well,' I said; 'a baby.'

'A baby!' he repeated, in a tone of horror, 'a baby! why, you're nothing but a baby yourself! What are you doing with two in one house?'

I felt so angry that I did not speak, and he got up from his chair, stalked to the other side of the fire-place, and, turning down the pretty lace coverlet, started as if he had never seen anything of the kind in his life before. I am sure he looked like a ghoul or an ogre, as if he could have eaten the child.

'Um!' he said, after a moment's consideration; 'a poor specimen! is that the best you can show?'

I should like to have knocked him down! 'How dare you, Dr. Vanny,' I cried, 'how dare you stand there and say such a thing?

Please to come away, I don't like you to stand there and look at my baby!'

'And I don't either,' he said, coolly, 'for it isn't worth looking at. Don't be afraid. I wouldn't attempt to eat it if I could, it's such a poor-looking thing.'

Was ever a human being so rude and disagreeable? And that he should sit down again in Edgar's very own chair, and look as if he did me a great favour by sitting there!

'What a little fury you look!' he said; 'you haven't improved a bit! and you look as dowdy as possible in that snuff-coloured carmelite; it would do for a Sister of Mercy.'

Now, he just said that to provoke me, for I had a very pretty dress on—one of my Stonecross dresses—a rich brown silk, and blue ribbons in my hair. I always tried to look as nice as I could when Edgar came home.

'What a house to come to!' he went on; 'a nice entertainment this for a man who has come a long journey, and is as hungry as a

trooper. You haven't even offered me a crust of dry bread.'

'I will get you something,' I said, rising to leave the room, for he really provoked me so much I wanted to get away from him; but he stopped me before I got to the door.

'Sit down,' he said; 'isn't there such a thing as a bell or a servant in the house, or do you do all the work yourself? Nice times, eh, Maude? How do you like washing tables, and trussing fowls? But I forgot, you won't have any fowls to truss—can't afford them, I suppose. What do you live on—red herrings and brown bread? very wholesome food, very.'

I did not speak, and Rawlins at the moment answered the bell, which he had rung when he told me to sit down again.

'Hey-day, dame!' he said, when he saw who it was, 'you here still! And how does Mannerton life suit you?'

'Very well, thank you, sir,' said Rawlins.

beaming all over her face. Dr. Vanny had always been a great favourite with her.

'Well, as you're here,' he said, 'perhaps I shall get a little tea; Maude doesn't know how to make it. Turn yourself round quickly, Rawlins, and let me have something to eat,' and Rawlins disappeared.

'Did not Rawlins open the door for you, Dr. Vanny?' I said.

'No, she didn't,' he said, coolly; 'I opened it for myself. I always find it the best to do things for myself, then I know there're well done, like your good brother, Mr. Retnor. By the way, Maude, you haven't asked after him yet.'

'Brother' and 'Mr. Retnor.' All at once, Stonecross, my old home, Maggie, Papa, Aunt Gretta, and Gypsie came before me. I felt as if I were choking.

'Well, well,' said Dr. Vanny, getting up and walking quickly about the room, 'what's done cannot be undone, so don't be a baby —but you are one. I told you so not five

minutes since, and you looked as if you could have flown at me, and I only spoke the truth.'

'Dr. Vanny,' I said, when I could speak, 'won't you tell me how Gypsie is?'

'So—so,' he replied; 'he hasn't the strength of Hercules, but I hope we shall have him all right when spring comes round. There's a great lump in my pocket,' he went on, diving into the said pocket, 'whatever is it?' and he drew out a white paper parcel, and threw it on the table. 'I wonder what it is, Maude; open it.'

I obeyed. Line for line—the very look and smile of Heaven, which his face always wore; the deep blue eyes and curved brow; the tender, sensitive, mobile mouth; the indescribable light—not of earth—which dwelt always on his face; it was Gypsie! my Gypsie! I cried long and heartily over the exquisite portrait, which even the rare skill of the artist could not make more lovely than my Gypsie really was.

When I looked up again, Dr. Vanny was pretending to be asleep in the arm-chair. I stole out of the room, and when I came back tea was all ready, the gas lighted, the fire built up, and baby was crying. It was the faintest little noise—it could not be called crying, it was only cooing, but Dr. Vanny was frowning tremendously.

'There's a noise to have in a house,' he said; 'it's enough to drive a man distracted! Can't you stop it, for if you can't I must go at once to an hotel. It will deafen me for life if it goes on much longer.'

I took baby up, and he was quiet directly, and laid cooing in my lap and watching the flames flicker, and doubling his little fists and toasting his toes—a perfect picture in the fire-light. Dr. Vanny watched him.

'I've no doubt you think him a great beauty,' he said; 'just like every other young simpleton of a mother! Well, well, he'll do!

Where did he get those big brown eyes from? Bless me! why, where's King Edgar of the curly locks? I'll take my affidavit that I had forgotten there was such a man in existence!'

'Oh, Dr. Vanny, how can you say so?' I said. 'I am quite sure it is not true.'

'And I'm quite sure that you're very rude,' he said. 'Pray, do you contradict your husband in that way? How often have you quarrelled? I dare lay a wager that he hasn't a pair of stockings in at the toes, or a shirt with two buttons on!'

I did not speak, for I heard a well-known foot outside, and I ran to meet Edgar, with baby in my arms. I was only a moment in the passage; then he went upstairs to wash his hands, and when I re-entered the room Dr. Vanny was standing by the window, putting aside the curtain, pretending to look into the street, but I am sure he had been rubbing his eyes.

'A couple of simpletons,' he said. 'As great a couple of simpletons as ever breathed!' and he chuckled and rubbed his hands, as if the fact afforded him infinite satisfaction. 'And what will you do when baby No. 2 comes?'

'Just what I do now,' I said.

'That you won't,' he said, with a grin; 'for you'll have ten hundred times as much to do. Don't you think I know more about such matters than you do?'

'Very likely you do,' I said.

'And you won't have time then to put your husband's slippers to the fire, or the cosey over the tea, or dress up your hair as fine as you have done it this afternoon; what do you do that for?'

'Edgar likes it,' I said.

'Edgar be hanged,' he said; 'you like it yourself—you know you do! you're as proud of it as a peacock is of its tail, you know you are!'

'I'm sure I'm not,' I said. 'I never

used to think anything about my hair until —until—'

'Until Edgar stuck his ugly eyes upon it, eh? Oh, you simpleton! But you always were an unlucky girl, Maude. I knew it the moment I set eyes upon you; and I ought to know, for I was the first who did set eyes upon you, and I saw it written on your face! You were born unlucky, eh?'

'I am sure I was not,' I cried, 'I am the most fortunate creature in the world.'

'Ah, well!' he said, 'we shall see; if people will walk into a quagmire with their eyes open, let them. They may flounder about as long as they like; I won't help them out.'

'I don't want you to help me,' I said.

'Who said anything about you?' he cried. 'So you *are* in a quagmire, are you, my lady? I'm glad to hear it—very glad. I'll tell your husband the moment he comes down, and he'll be glad to hear it, too.

There's nothing like people getting what they deserve in this world.'

'I haven't got what I deserved,' I said. 'I never deserved to be half as happy as I am! Oh, Dr. Vanny, no one could have *deserved* what I have got.'

'You goose,' he said, 'you deserved a good thrashing, and I am afraid you haven't got it. Well, you may yet, who knows? Does he ever beat you? Tell me before he comes down. Be quick; I hear his step on the stairs. Does he? eh?'

Edgar came in, and Dr. Vanny went to meet him, and shook hands as naturally as if he had only seen him the day before; but I saw him scan my husband from head to foot, with one of those looks which omitted nothing and retained everything in its glance—rapid, searching, penetrating,—and he then turned away, and, sitting down to the tea-table, asked Edgar if he had seen the 'Times' that day, and how the cotton trade was in Mannerton.

Edgar had taken baby from me, and did not reply at once, and Dr. Vanny went on talking in the most ordinary manner, and about the most common-place topics he could find. I was puzzled at Edgar's looks; what made him look as he did? Was it my fancy, or was the expression of his face, when he stood before Dr. Vanny, one which could only be expressed by the word—defiant? It must have been my fancy; he was naturally nervous at meeting Dr. Vanny, and this manner I noticed covered his nervousness. For when he looked up from fondling baby, his face was just the old face, except, except—I wonder if Dr. Vanny noticed that Edgar looked careworn and restless?

I rang for the nurse-girl to take baby, and then we sat down and had tea. Such a happy tea! They talked on all subjects, but with not the least allusion to personal matters. How pleasant it was to see Dr. Vanny sitting quite at his ease in our own house, and to

hear the well-known voice, and have the old, kind fatherly smile!

For he was very kind now, and did not make any more disagreeable remarks after he had once asked Edgar if he had not found out that I made a shocking housekeeper, and when Edgar only replied by a look at me, Dr. Vanny laughed, and said, he was as foolish as I was. It was not one of the nights when Edgar had to return to the Grammar School, and before the evening was over Dr. Long came in, and he and Dr. Vanny seemed to be friends directly. And I sat by with baby in my arms, too happy to talk, and so happy to listen, until I had to leave to put him to bed, which I always do myself, in spite of Rawlins, who says she believes I don't think she is fit to be trusted to touch a baby; but she knows she does almost just as she likes with him.

Then when baby was fast asleep, I glanced into our little spare bedroom, when I knew Rawlins was not near, for she would have

been quite angry had she seen me. She had made all ready and lighted a fire there, and I thought even Dr. Vanny must be pleased with the room, for though it was small and simply furnished, it looked as neat and bright as hands could make it. I was thinking so, standing before the fire, when Edgar came in.

'My darling,' he said, 'I came to look after you; where have you been all this time?'

'Doesn't Dr. Vanny's room look nice, Edgar?' I said, with a little housekeeping pride.

'Everything looks nice in our home, Maude, and my wife looks the nicest of all.'

I daresay it was very foolish of Edgar to say so, but it was very pleasant for me to hear him, and to know that he believed what he said.

And so we sat down, just for a minute or two, before the fire.

'I am so glad, Edgar—so very glad that Dr. Vanny has come; aren't you?'

'If you are, I must be,' he said.

'Why, Edgar! are you not glad for your own sake?'

'Yes—no; I don't know why I should be particularly glad, Maude.'

I was so astonished I could not speak.

'Why, Edgar! after—after all, you know—that Dr. Vanny should forgive it, and come and stay with us! It is just like him; he is so good!'

'I see no particular goodness in his coming to see you,' said Edgar.

I had never heard Edgar speak in such a manner before; but when he saw the tears in my eyes, he took me in his arms and kissed them away.

'Maude,' he said, 'forgive me. I am cross and unreasonable. I am not worthy of you. Forgive me, my wife.'

'There is nothing to forgive,' I said, quite happy again. 'You are tired and overworked; that is just it, and nothing more.'

'Yes,' he said, 'it is that, and nothing

more—nothing more;' and he rubbed his hand over his forehead as if he would rub away the cloud that had gathered there.

We went down-stairs together, and just as we reached the parlour door, Edgar said to me: 'If Dr. Long offer to go, Maude, don't press him to stop; I would rather he went;' and before I could reply Edgar had opened the door. How is it that he does not like Dr. Long as he used to do?

But Dr. Long did not propose to go; he seemed to be enjoying his evening as much as Dr. Vanny; and I should have enjoyed it, too, if I only could have forgotten what Edgar had said. It was so unlike him.

Dr. Long left after supper, and when we had sat a little time round the fire, Dr. Vanny said he thought I had better go to bed, for very likely baby kept me awake at night. I went at once, for I was sure it was a hint that he wanted to talk to Edgar. But Edgar did not seem to want to talk to Dr. Vanny; he rose too, and said he would

show Dr. Vanny his room. I saw an unmistakable look of surprise come across Dr. Vanny's usually guarded face. Edgar must have seen it too, but he took no notice until Dr. Vanny said very decidedly, 'Mr. Farren, let Maude go; I want to talk to you, and I must be off to-morrow.'

I was certain from the look in Edgar's face that he was going to make some reply which would be better not said; so I stopped it by a kiss, and begged him in a whisper to stay and talk to Dr. Vanny for my sake. He sat down again without a word. Dr. Vanny put a hand on each side of my face in the old way, and looked me steadily in the eyes.

'I see, Maude, it is all right with you; your eyes are as truthful as ever; you could not deceive me if you tried. I am glad it is so. Good-night, my child. God in Heaven bless you!'

He kissed me on either cheek, and I left them together.

Yes, it is 'all right' with me; but I cannot possibly think why Edgar did not want to talk to him. It is the very thing I wanted. Of course, Dr. Vanny is come to settle all matters as my trustee. I am so thankful he is come. Now Edgar will lose that harassed, troubled look he has worn ever since my illness, and I shall see no more dark shadows on my husband's face. They never used to be there.

They sat talking so long that at last I fairly fell asleep, anxious as I was to hear all that Dr. Vanny had said. I had listened to their low, deep tones—so earnest, and Edgar's sometimes raised—till I was quite tired out. I cannot think what they could find to talk about for so long.

Dr. Vanny went this afternoon. He said he must. I wish he could have stayed longer; it seemed to me that I must go with him, because he was going to my Gypsie. I could not get anything satisfactory from him about Gypsie; and, now I come to think

of it, I do not think he once mentioned Maggie the whole of the time he was here; I wonder if she is from home. I am sure Dr. Vanny evaded my questions about Gypsie. I wonder if he came on purpose to tell me about him, though really he has told me nothing. I gather more from what he has not said than from what he has.

Edgar told me nothing about their conversation last night, and to-night he is at the School. He said he might be late, and that if he were, I had better not sit up for him. What could he mean by such an absurd thing? Not sit up for him! As if it were likely that I should let him come in cold and hungry at any time, and not be there to meet him! But I don't think he knew what he was saying. Indeed, he was off to the School this morning before Dr. Vanny came down to breakfast, and he stayed there at dinner-time, and never came to say 'good-bye.' He sent up a note in the morning to say he should not be able

to leave. How very unfortunate that it should happen so for the first time when Dr. Vanny was here!

He and I had dinner alone. His manner was quite changed to me to-day; no bantering or making the least fun of me, but so gravely and quietly kind. When I asked him again and again about Gypsie, he admitted that he was far from well, and had not been well for some time. I could get nothing from him but the assurance that he might grow stronger. 'If only we keep him free from an attack of illness,' he said, 'there is nothing to fear at present.' So I took what comfort I could get from that.

He told me that Papa never mentioned my name; and that he had engaged an Oxford graduate to teach Gypsie. I feel sure from what Dr. Vanny inadvertently said in the course of our conversation, that he has dared Papa's anger by pleading for me, but all in vain. He did not say so directly, but I learnt quite enough indirectly.

One thing has pleased me very much about Dr. Vanny's visit. He has never reproached me or my husband. Since last night he has been as kind as any father could have been; but I wished he would talk about Edgar; he has scarcely mentioned him to-day, except just at the last, at the station. I never had any chance of telling him what Edgar is to me, and what a happy married life mine has been. He would have us start for the train long before the time. He was very silent as we went, but as we were walking up and down, he said, 'I will tell you now, Maude, that I have had a long talk with your husband about money matters. I should have been here sooner but for several reasons, one of which was that I thought it would be quite as well to let you find out for yourself some of the inconveniences of your new mode of life, and learn that after all there were some blessings in your lot at home which you did not see. I thought it would be well that you should

learn the worth of money by knowing what it is not to have it very plentifully for a time; love is but a sorry bill of fare, and it is well not to take matters entirely into our hands when we cannot just get our own way. It is safer and wiser, Maude, to let God manage for us. He will bring things about, if they are to be; and if not, it is better to be without them. But I am not going to blame you, poor child! On one point I am perfectly satisfied; from what I have seen, I feel sure that you are quite happy. I had another reason for not coming. You know that I am one of the trustees connected with your money, and being of age and married, you have now a right to your fortune on your mother's side. I will not hide from you that your father has been endeavouring to throw obstacles in the way of your having your money; in fact, trying to prevent you receiving at all. Happily for you and your children, the property is so secured that it was impossible that any

valid objection could be raised; consequently his attempts have altogether failed. This matter was only decided last August. I confess it is beyond my comprehension to know how you manage, for you knew no more of the real value of money when you left Stonecross, Maude, than your baby does now. Your husband thought last night that even my position as trustee and as your very old friend did not justify my wishing to know the amount of his income; and though I am still in ignorance about it, I cannot be blind to the fact that it cannot be enough to cover your expenses.'

'He has—' I began.

'Hush, child! do not tell me what your husband does not wish me to know. He cannot have what will go on providing you and your children with things as you have them now; therefore I am anxious to have this money secured to you and yours without delay.'

'Oh, Dr. Vanny,' I said, 'I am so glad.

I have been longing for this! Edgar must have it, and then he will not have to work so hard. Edgar must have every penny put into his own hands. Please, Dr. Vanny, let it be arranged so; I know you have the power.'

'I have the power, certainly,' he said; 'as your father, finding he cannot hinder you from receiving the money, has refused to act; but I should certainly not use that power in giving "every penny to Edgar." It was my wish and intention, seeing you have such perfect confidence in your husband—it was my wish to settle upon you and your children the income arising from the investment of six thousand of your fortune, and to place the remaining four thousand at your husband's disposal. It is only right, that as you are Edgar's wife, he should derive some benefit from what pertains to you; but I am sorry to tell you that your husband obstinately and resolutely refuses to hold, or touch, or have placed in any way

for his benefit, one farthing of your money; and he does this in a way and manner which, I confess, has grieved me deeply. It is not like him. He not only refuses to discuss the matter, but will not listen to any fair consideration of it, or opinion about it. I am sorry, Maude, because there is nothing heroic or grand in pretending to be blind to what is equitable and just. Would he calmly have discussed the matter with me, I think I could have shown him that by acceding to my plan he would have secured your interests and comfort as much as his own. He cannot be blind to the fact that a portion of your fortune fairly belongs to him, and that, by refusing to accept it, he will grieve and naturally disappoint you. He prevents you bringing him a good, which, had you not known it was in your power to bring, you certainly never would have become his wife in the way you did. I know you well enough to be assured of this. If your husband would agree to my

proposal, he would remove from your mind anything which may oppress it as to the expenses he incurs, and you would feel that you are a practical help to him in more ways than one. But, as I said, he refuses even to discuss the matter, and puts me in a position which makes it impossible for me to learn in the least how matters are with him, or what his prospects are. I am unable to do anything, as he evidently does not wish me to interfere. I am very sorry. It would have been a great pleasure to me to have been his friend. He is altered, and I am utterly at a loss for the reason. It only remains for me to see that the whole of your fortune is settled on you and your children.'

'It shall not be!' I exclaimed; 'it shall not be!'

'That is foolish talking, Maude; it must be, unless you can use your influence with Edgar to more purpose than I have been able to do. If you can, I shall be glad;

and I will leave the matter open another week, hoping to hear from you at the end of that time. If I do not, I shall proceed with arrangements as I have stated, and you will receive documents in accordance. You are happy, Maude, and I must be satisfied; but I wish I had seen your husband again, as I am afraid we parted in anger last night. I felt so vexed with him, for I am perfectly sure that Edgar's income cannot cover your expenditure. Have you heard from your Aunt Louise?'

I could say no more on the subject. Dr. Vanny's abrupt change of topic and the tone of his voice told me so.

'Yes,' I said; 'I have heard once.'

'What did she say?' he asked, shortly.

What had she said? I remembered—'You will have to suffer, Maude; Christ be with you in the suffering.'

I said I could not tell him.

'Very well. Here is my train. Child, remember if you ever want a friend, you

have two—God above, and Dr. Vanny here. Good-bye.'

Three minutes more and he was gone.

Edgar has not come home yet, and it is very late. I have never known him so late before. I have such a bright fire, and all is so comfortable. I shall be glad when the holidays begin, and he will have some rest. I wish he would come; I want to talk to him, and make him say that he will do just what I wish about the money. I know he will; he has never refused me a request, and he will not now. Baby is beginning to stir, so I must put away my book.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

Monday, December 2.

More than two years since I have written a word! More than two years since I have even opened my book!

I remember it, because—because it was just before Edgar's Christmas holidays!

Two years! It must be more. Surely I an getting old now; was I only twenty-four last June? It seems impossible. I have lived a long life. A life of infinite joy, infinite anguish; and then—what? What have these two years brought me?

Another year will soon begin. Can I think of the past now; can I review it calmly and write about it? Let me try. It will do me no harm, but good.

I used to think, and Edgar thought so too, that the memories which Christmas and New Year brought were wonderfully sweet and strange. Now, what they will evermore bring us must be wonderfully strange and sad!

Let me recall that day when I last had my book before me. It was the day Dr. Vanny had been with us. I remember, now, so well writing these last words I see on the page. I was waiting for Edgar to come home from the Grammar School. He had never been so late before, and I began to feel very nervous and anxious as I sat listening to every footfall. I had laid my pen down, and was thinking of Dr. Vanny—following him in imagination to Stonecross, and wondering what Papa would say when he found out that he had been to see us; and then my thoughts went to Gypsie, and I got up and looked at my sleeping baby, and was wishing that Edgar would not keep putting off his baptism, when I thought I heard my husband's step, but when I listened I knew I was

mistaken ; that was not his. I should have known his among a hundred—so firm and free—and this was uncertain and irresolute, and I glanced again at the time-piece—Edgar's present to me on my last birthday. I saw that its hands pointed to a quarter after twelve ! I thought I must be mistaken, and I got up to examine it, and then—surely that *was* the front door. Then the footstep I had heard before *had* been his, and now he was opening the door. I ran into the hall—

'O, Edgar ! I thought you were never coming ! What can have made you so dreadfully late ?'

'A—m I la—te,' said Edgar, but he seemed to get his words out with such difficulty that I was terrified, and more so as he neither looked at me, nor kissed me.

'You are ill,' I exclaimed ; 'or something has happened. Tell me what it is, at once, Edgar.'

'I—I—is it late ; wha—t is i—t, Mau—de ? Wh—a—ts—the—th—e ma—t—ter ?'

All this time Edgar had been standing in the passage—or—trying to stand—and take his coat off—but he had not done it. He was still vainly trying when I laid my hands on it and took it off without a word. He then turned to go into the parlour, but he could not have got in, had I not put my arm through his, and led him in—in—up to his arm-chair, into which I put him, and in which he sat down and gazed vacantly into the fire.

I stood silently by him. Two minutes—five—ten—an hour might have passed; I do not know. To me the earth seemed dizzying—reeling—swaying from its centre; and I stood on its verge; not a foot between me and an endless abyss; not a hand stretched out to save me from falling! Alone; alone in God's world!

And baby slept on. Every breath he drew sounded through the room. Every tick of the time-piece mocked the stillness.

Presently Edgar looked up, and said:—

'We—ll Mau—de and wh—ere's, you kn—ow, wh—ere's Do—c—tor Van—n—y?'

I knelt down by him. I did not tremble. I did not shrink. I do not know that I changed colour. I put my arm round him—my husband. I looked up into his face; yes, the face which had always looked back into mine with such manly tenderness, such beaming intelligence! I looked up into his face and I saw . . . .

'Edgar,' I said; 'come with me; you are not well to-night, come.'

'Eh?' he said; 'I thi—nk I—m no—t ve—ry,' but his head sank down on his breast and he muttered unintelligibly.

. . . .

. . . .

That night was the first night in my life through which I had ever kept watch by another; ever sat by a—no, it was *not* a sick bed. Would to God it had been! Would to God I had listened to the ravings of delirium, the moanings of pain, rather than—what?

I had sent Rawlins to bed at her usual time. There was no one but myself—no one!

I bathed his hot hands and forehead; I soothed his restless tossings; I watched his heavy sleep as morning stole on.

That night did for me what otherwise it would have taken a lifetime to do. I had battled with many a tempest before. I had wrestled through many an hour of anguish; but this—this was different to all! I did not give way to despair for one moment. Through the quiet night watches, while the clocks of the great town told the hours, there mingled ever with their tones, 'for better, for worse;' 'till death us do part.'

He was mine—my husband; mine still! Mine through pain and sorrow, then, how much more through weakness and—no, let me call it by its right name—sin? I did not for one moment endeavour to evade the fact, or to shun the truth. The husband whom I had so blindly believed in, so utterly trusted,

so wilfully clung to ; the husband whom I had put in the place of God, and to whom I had given a love which was idolatry, had sinned—sinned, I doubted not, terribly, deeply, darkly ! For I knew I did not see the whole extent of Edgar's fall ; I knew there was something which I knew not of ; something beyond what I saw ; something which had brought it on, and driven Edgar to it. I was certain some terrible cause must have been at work to make Edgar—Edgar who was the soul of honour, tenderness, unselfishness—to make him thus forget every instinct and habit. But what this other sin was, I had yet to learn. I had to know what it was which had driven him—my husband—to forget his wife, his child, his home, all his past life, all his present obligations, all his future hopes, his God, and brought him home a ——

And beyond all this—beyond the vague fears which curdled my blood, and froze my heart—a strange presentiment told me that

I was the cause of it all. I, who would have died any moment to save him; I, who had given up all for him; I had caused this fall! With the wonderful clearness of a direct vision, in those dark hours, I saw it. Every look and tone which I could not explain—which I had not cared to explain—for I believed my husband could not do wrong, now rose clear and fresh to my memory. His entire change of views upon religious matters, his strange dislike to Dr. Long, his carelessness about baby's baptism—and even the fact that since baby's birth we had scarcely ever been in a place of worship; his constraint with Dr. Vanny; his refusal to hear him or talk with him upon money matters; his absenting himself from dinner that day—I saw it all now. I had been blind before—wilfully blind—or I should have seen it all long since. Dr. Vanny had seen it, and he had been only a few hours with him. I remembered his words to me at the station, not twelve hours before:—'I am perfectly sure,

Maude, that Edgar's income cannot cover your expenditure. Have you heard from Aunt Louise, and what did she say to you ?'

What *had* she said ?—'You will have to suffer Maude; Christ be with you in the suffering.'

I *was* suffering. I had disbelieved in Heaven. I had hazarded all for earth. I had knelt down before an idol, and lo ! it had crumbled into dust.

One o'clock passed; two; three; four; baby stirred—moved—cried. His little voice blended with, with—his father's broken, meaningless phrases; and I had to take him up; to comfort him; to feed him; to soothe him; to look into his face, and see there Edgar's eyes, Edgar's smile. And all the time his father laid there and knew him not!

No tear fell from my eyes upon baby's face; he knew no difference in the hand or the voice which soothed him; he slept when I laid him back as peacefully as ever. And then five o'clock struck, and Edgar grew quieter; and before six o'clock chimed he was in a

deep, heavy slumber. But how would he awake?

If I could have saved him that! If only I could have borne for him the intolerable shame, the stinging remorse, the sense of hurt self-respect. But I could not; my love was powerless; it could not save him a pang, or lessen for him one pain. Poor, miserable, blind, weak love! All it could do was to stand by and pity, to look on and weep! My love had not availed for the past; I could have no hope it would for the future. Nay, it had driven him on to his doom; for though my conviction needed not confirmation, it had it in Edgar's muttered, broken, restless words;—words in which he spoke of 'Dr. Long' and 'brother' and 'money,' and now and then a deprecating 'it is for Maude;' 'she must have what she has always had.'

Yes; I was guilty; I knew it. Guilty at God's bar: guilty at man's.

But I would atone. And from the lowest depths of my bleeding heart, there sprang—

as there had never sprung before—the cry, 'God be merciful to me a sinner!'

Yes, I would atone. No matter what was before me—shame, coldness, neglect; deeper sin; days of endurance and nights of ceaseless vigil—I was ready, 'till death us do part.' He was mine. Mine to forgive, to warn, to save; to love through all!

Six o'clock chimed; seven; eight. Then the faint morning light began to struggle through the drawn blinds; and a tinge of rosy red brightened the world. To me a new world; never the same again. I knelt down in a mute agony of speechless prayer. I stretched out my hands to God, and in that hour He heard me. Trouble was nigh, but God was nigher. In the midst of the billows—higher than the water-floods—above the tempest, a still small voice arose, and it whispered, 'Peace.'

I cannot tell how long I knelt there, crouching down by the bed where *he* lay, covering my face with my hands, passing through the furnace, and yet seeing in that

furnace a vision—and the form of that vision was like unto the 'Son of Man.'

I became conscious of a continued low knocking at the door. Baby awoke, and began to cry loudly. The day had begun, and my work had begun. I was ready for it.

I answered Rawlins in a low tone and without opening the door.

'Rawlins, I am very late this morning. I will be down in a few minutes; your master is not well; come up again in five minutes for baby,' and Rawlins departed.

I took baby up and he was quiet. I went to the window and drew up the blind. The sun had risen now; the red beams fell broadly in through the frosted window, and they shone upon my husband's face, but they did not awake him.

I turned away and stood before the glass. I still wore the brown silk dress; still the heavy plaits of black hair were coiled round and round, as Edgar liked to see them, and the blue ribbons still fastened them, though

somewhat loosely, together. But the face! was it the same? I pushed aside and turned back the thick hair from my temples and forehead, and underneath—yes, I was *not* mistaken—it was silvery, it was white! A few hours had done it. Streak upon streak; and I softly passed my finger over them, as if a special bond made them precious—the secret, silent, stern bond of sorrow! But they were all underneath. Edgar should never see them; never know they were there. Baby put out his hand, and seized hold of the very locks I had just passed my finger over, and I could not see the grey hairs for baby's little hand. He crumpled them up and hid them; I could see nothing but his dimpled fingers! I laid him down in his cot, and then the tears came,—came for one minute, fast, and hot and unchecked. But I wiped them away, and carried baby's cot with great effort outside the door. He screamed lustily, and I heard Rawlins come quickly upstairs, and carry him off, soothing

and loving him. I turned the key, drew down the blind, took off my silk dress, combed and brushed out my hair, and bathed my hands and face. I looked at my watch; it was twenty minutes to nine. Edgar still lay there, heavy and unconscious. I hastily put on my walking things and a veil, and went downstairs into a little room which we had made into a nursery. The nurse-girl only came in the daytime, and did not sleep in the house. Rawlins was washing baby, who kicked and crowed in glee. She ceased her operations, and uttered an exclamation the moment she saw me.

'Whatever is the matter, Miss Maude?' she said. Since baby had come, Rawlins had, much to my relief, given me my right name. In her astonishment this morning, she unconsciously slipped back to the more familiar 'Miss Maude.'

'I have had a disturbed night, Rawlins,' I said, 'and your master is not at all well this morning. He is not up, but he is sleeping

now, so you will be very careful that there is no noise to disturb him?'

'What's the matter with him, Miss Maude?' said Rawlins; 'it can be nothing serious that you need look like that!'

I went steadily on,—'I think, Rawlins, that he will be better after he has had a good sleep; he did not sleep at all at the beginning of the night. I am going now to tell Dr. Long that he will not be able to be at the School this morning.'

'You are not going out, Miss Maude, with no breakfast, and you looking like that?'

'I will take some breakfast. Rawlins, will you be very careful that nothing disturbs your master while I am away?'

'Yes, I'll take care,' and I knew she would.

I did not think Edgar would awake during my absence, and if he did—it might be as well. He would have time to collect his thoughts before he saw me.

I went into the next room: it was the

picture of neatness, of comfort,—of home. Everything arranged with that spotless care which Edgar liked so much. The table as neat as hands could make it; a fire blazing welcome; my canary singing in the window; my winter roses just in bloom; my pretty work-table—Edgar's last present; my book-shelf, which he had himself put up, almost filled with new volumes;—turn where I would, something spoke of Edgar's love.

I poured out a cup of strong coffee, and forced myself to swallow it. I took some pieces of bread, which I doubled up and put in my pocket, and threw away the first chance I had. I cut a slice of ham, that Rawlins might see that the plate and knife and fork had been used, and hid it under the large piece. I drew my veil tightly over my face, and then went out.

One glance up to the room where Edgar lay, and one prayer to God—I could pray now—and I rapidly walked towards the School. It was a fine winter's morning,

just such another as that one—little more than a year ago—when Edgar and I had walked through the streets of Mannerton to the old church where we were married. Just as then the golden sunbeams slid down between the tall chimneys; but oh! the change! I walked very quickly, and was not long in reaching the School. Without staying an instant to let my courage flag, I rung the bell loudly, resolutely, at Dr. Long's door. It must have sounded as if a strong hand and a merry heart gave that vigorous pull. Alas, alas! It was a bleeding heart and a hand so weak that it dropped like a baby's the moment it had touched the bell.

I was ushered into Dr. Long's library; a large handsome room with two windows looking east, and three sides of the room furnished with classified, well-bound books.

Dr. Long was with me in a moment. I put up my veil and looked steadily at him. His benevolent face was utterly concerned when he looked at me.

'Mrs. Farren! Is it possible? I trust nothing is wrong.'

'My husband is so unwell, Dr. Long, that it will be impossible for him to be at the School this morning. I trust it will not inconvenience you much; he will be there, I know, if possible, this afternoon.'

'I am truly grieved to hear it,' said Dr. Long. 'I beg he will not make any effort to come, if he does not feel equal to it. We shall, of course, miss him much—good men are always missed, you know, Mrs. Farren. I am glad for his sake that the holidays are so near. I have thought several times lately that he has not seemed well, and particularly so last night; this was why I insisted upon his leaving me so early, and not staying for the extra work. I am glad that he would be at home about six o'clock; pray tell him from me that we can manage quite well without him; he is always so anxious about doing his full duty.'

'Thank you,' I said, and I rose to go.

'You will stay a moment? Mrs. Long will be so pleased to see you. I will tell her.'

'No, thank you; I must not stay.'

'Not a moment? Well, I must not urge you as your husband is at home. If he is not better, I will come and see him this evening.'

'Oh, no!' involuntarily burst from my lips.

Dr. Long was going towards the door, and he stood still with astonishment.

'I mean,' I said, 'I mean, Dr. Long, that I feel sure Edgar will be with you this afternoon; he will be so anxious to come.'

'Ah! I see. I hope he may be able, but you must not allow him unless you are quite sure he is fit; he must be made to take care of himself, you know, for yours and baby's sake. How is the young gentleman?'

'Very well, I thank you,' and I got out.

I breathed again—a deep, long, sobbing breath; 'he is always so anxious about doing his full duty;' 'for yours and baby's sake;'

'home about six o'clock.' Oh, Edgar! Edgar!

I went rapidly home, and all the way the words, 'about six o'clock,' were sounding in my ears.

I opened the door, shut it softly, and stood in the passage a moment to listen. The only sound in the house was the voice of the nurse-girl singing softly and cheerily to baby. Rawlins had heard me come in, and she came out into the passage.

I did not put my veil up. 'Is baby all right, Rawlins?'

'As right as possible,' answered Rawlins, briskly; 'and there has not been the least noise.'

'And you have not heard your master stirring?'

'No,' said Rawlins; 'and I have been upstairs two or three times to listen.'

Been upstairs to listen! But she could learn nothing through that closed door.

'I have got a cup of hot tea ready,' she

said, 'and a little dry toast; you take it upstairs with you, and get master to take it as soon as he wakes. It will do him good any way.'

I took the tea, and was going upstairs.

'Well, I declare!' said Rawlins, reproachfully, as she watched me. 'You haven't once looked at baby or kissed him. I never knew you do so before. Look what a picture he is,' and she took him from the nurse-girl and held him up. I kissed him without a word. Rawlins turned away with a grunt, and muttered, 'It's all because I washed him!'

Edgar was still sleeping. I noiselessly took off my things, arranged the room and made it perfectly neat, and then sat down by him.

I had not been sitting long when he stirred— said something I could not understand, moved restlessly, and awoke. I laid my hand on his forehead and kissed him. He looked vacantly at me.

'You are better, Edgar,' I said. 'You

have not been well; I am glad you have slept late; you will be much better for it.'

He put his hand up to his forehead and said, 'What a frightful pain I have in my head! What on earth is the matter with me?'

'Nothing much,' I said; 'only a bad headache; you did not sleep well; you have been overworked lately.'

He seemed as if he did not understand; he moved uneasily on his pillows and evidently tried to think.

'I can't remember,' he said; 'I promised to stay the evening and help Dr. Long; what am I doing here?'

'Dr. Long does not expect you to-day, Edgar,' I said, quietly; 'I have been to him and told him that you are not well, and he says they can do quite well without you.'

'You have—been—*where*, Maude?' he said. 'Surely I must be going to have a fever. I never felt so horridly queer in my life before. I don't understand; where is Dr. Vanny?'

'Dr. Vanny is gone, Edgar; you have forgotten, but don't try and think; I want you to lie still and rest. I will get you some tea,' and I left the room for it.

Edgar took it without a word when I returned and drank it rapidly off, but would touch nothing to eat. 'Whatever makes me so dreadfully thirsty?' he said; 'tell Dr. Vanny, Maude, that I will be down directly.'

I said nothing but 'Try to go to sleep, again, Edgar.'

He turned round on his pillow. 'Don't let me be late for School, Maude.'

'No,' I said, and I sat down again beside him. But he did not sleep; he tossed about, and occasionally put his hand to his head, and at last turned round to me and said, sharply, 'I must get up; what on earth are you keeping me in bed for?'

I was very anxious he should not get up. I was quite sure he would not be fit to go to the School that day. At all hazards he must not go; his whole appearance would tell in a

moment what was the matter; and Dr. Long! the masters and the boys! My heart sank. I tried to persuade him in vain, and I left the room to get his hot water; but as I did so, my heart rose in a speechless petition to Heaven. I only asked. If it were not granted, I would still be patient. I had deserved it all. I had long forsaken God, and it was only right that He should forsake me. Merciful Father! thy miserable child judged Thee—the good God—by herself.

When I came back I found that Edgar had attempted to get up, but the intolerable pain in his head and the burning thirst were too much for him. I had no difficulty in persuading him to lie down again, and then I went to make him something to drink. He had peremptorily asked for brandy. I went downstairs to the sideboard. I took the bottle out; it was nearly quite full. Edgar had bought it for me during my illness. I carried it into the kitchen; Rawlins was in the little nursery, and the nursery looked out into the

front. I uncorked the bottle, carried in into the yard, and poured every drop of the brandy down the grating. I then broke the bottle into fragments, picked up the pieces, and threw them over the wall on to a piece of waste land—the receptacle of the breakages of the whole row of houses. It was but the work of a moment. I went back into the house to Rawlins.

'Rawlins,' I said, 'will you prepare some pleasant, cool drink as quickly as you possibly can? Your master is so thirsty; as quickly as you can, please.'

'If he can't eat anything,' said Rawlins, 'the best thing for him would be a little brandy and water. I will mix him some.'

'No, Rawlins; it is not to be brandy, because his head is bad. Are there any lemons in the house? Then please make me directly some of that nice drink you used to bring me when I was ill at Stonecross. It was made of lemons, was it not?'

'Lemons!' repeated Rawlins in a tone of

supreme contempt; 'he has been worked and harassed to death lately; what with that School, and you being ill; and now he's worn out! What good will lemons do him? Do as I say, Miss Maude, and give him some brandy and water; it will make him sleep, and then he'll get some strength in him.'

'Where are the lemons, Rawlins?' I said. 'If you are too busy I will make it myself, as I must have it at once. If you cannot remember where they are, I will go and buy some.'

'Well, I'm sure!' was all Rawlins said; and she made me what I required at once.

As soon as it was ready, I took it up to Edgar, and he drank a large tumbler full hastily off. 'This — this is not what I wanted, Maude. I wanted some brandy; didn't I say so?'

'It would make your head worse, dear Edgar; and, besides, there is not a drop in the house.'

'None in the house! we must get some. Give me something more to drink, Maude.'

I obeyed. And so the next three hours passed—sometimes in broken sleep; sometimes in impatiently endured pain; sometimes in disconnected talk; and oftener in lying with his eyes wide open, endeavouring to recall the events of yesterday. I saw his recollection was beginning to be clear, and that memory was beginning to be faithful, and that some consciousness of what had really occurred was dawning on him. And so, after seeing he had everything he wanted, I left him.

I went downstairs and tried to think—tried to realise what had happened, and what might yet happen. It was three o'clock before Edgar came down, and the moment he entered the room I knew that he was perfectly conscious of everything. All the vacancy and want of intelligence had disappeared; he knew everything and he felt everything. His face was stern, and white,

and resolute ; his countenance expressive of a cold, repelling self-loathing ; his lips firmly set ; his whole appearance that of self-imposed and determined resolution—a resolution to bear in silence his own torture, and to resist all sympathy. It seemed as if he felt himself sunk too low for help, and beyond all forgiveness. There was not the slightest sign of weakness about him, except that his hands nervously trembled.

I went to meet him just as I always did, but he did not look at me, and seemed not to perceive that I expected the usual kiss.

'What is the time, Maude?' and as he spoke, he drew out his own watch.

'Three o'clock, dear Edgar ; sit down and let us have dinner, and then we shall have such a nice quiet afternoon! How delightful it will be for you to be at home all the afternoon! I am so glad you will not have to go to the School ; it is such a long time since you have had an afternoon at home! Do sit down, dear Edgar, and let us

have dinner. Rawlins will be in despair, and she has taken such pains to cook something to tempt your appetite.'

I went on talking rapidly. Edgar took no notice, and I left him no time to reply. I heard Rawlins coming with dinner, and I slipped out of the room. Just as I got into the passage, Rawlins entered the room, and I heard her say, 'I hope you are better, sir,' and all Edgar's reply—short, cold, and admitting of no more remark—was, 'I am, thank you.'

When Rawlins came out, I glanced covertly at her face, and I saw she looked perfectly mystified—nothing more. Edgar, who was so frank, so courteous, so kind to servants, and such a universal favourite with them! I saw Rawlins knew not what to make of his words or manner. She said nothing to me, for which I was very thankful, for Rawlins was a privileged person, and used generally to express her opinion with the greatest freedom.

When she had finished taking dinner in, I went into the nursery, took baby, and carried him into the room—straight up to Edgar. But I had misjudged. The instant Edgar saw him, a spasm of agony and remorse passed over his face; with his hand he pushed the child from him, and said, in a low tone, 'Take him away; for God's sake take him away!' Baby was frightened, and began to cry, and I took him away. When I returned, Edgar had taken up his newspaper, which I had laid ready for him. He scarcely touched his dinner, or spoke to me, but, making some slight apology for reading, he steadily turned over his newspaper, and appeared to be studying it deeply.

Dinner was soon finished, and the moment it was done he got up.

'Did you say you had seen Dr. Long, Maude?'

'Yes: I saw him this morning.'

'Did he expect I should be there this afternoon?'

'I told him you would if you could, dear; but I did not think you would be well enough.'

He made no reply, but turned away and took out his watch.

'It is past four; we have dined so late, I shall not require any tea. Can I have the other room undisturbed, Maude? I have some work which I want to finish.'

'Oh, yes; no one shall disturb you; but I may come and tell you when tea is ready, Edgar? We will not have it until seven.'

'I don't want any tea,' he said; 'and I would rather not be disturbed.'

'Very well; you shall not,' and he left me without another word!

Mechanically I rang the bell, and after Rawlins had removed the dinner things, the nurse-girl brought baby as usual. When I was left with him alone, Nature would have her way, and bitter drops of anguish fell on baby's little face. I had deserved it all, but truly my punishment was great—greater than

I could bear. Poverty—sickness—death—would have been nothing—absolutely nothing; but my husband's love! I realised then that he had spoken coldly to me—left me—left me alone! And it was not repentance that possessed him; not abhorrence of the wrong, and a true sorrow which would prevent a recurrence of it in future; but it was a hard, cold, bitter self-abandonment, which neither asked nor expected forgiveness. And how could I reach him; how save him; how let him know that I loved him more than ever? But I did not despair. So long as we love—love consciously, love truly, we cannot despair; it is only when all love is dead, when its very fountains are dried up, and its healing waters turned into the bitter springs of hate, that despair creeps in. 'Till death us do part.' Neglect, coldness, distance—sin—could not separate us. There was no gulf on this side of the grave which my love could not bridge over, and—which it should not bridge over.

This hour—the hour after dinner—had been one of the happiest in the day. We had nearly an hour to be together—he, and I, and baby; for he had not to be at the School until three o'clock. A quiet time it was; a little break in the day to gather up the golden threads of life, and weave them into a beautiful design, and now—— But 'many waters cannot quench love.'

As I sat there alone—for baby had settled down into sleep—I remembered what Dr. Long had said about coming to see Edgar in the evening, should he not be at School. He would come then, and if Edgar knew that he were coming, he would never meet him; he would leave the house, and where might he not go? If I did not tell Edgar, the result would be the same. He was in no mood to restrain himself, or try to hide a thing. He would be defiant, he would be angry; he might—yes, he might—insult Dr. Long; and then Dr. Long would understand it all. I was perfectly sure that, if he

saw Edgar that night, all concealment would be at an end, and then—then the downward course would be sure. Once let Edgar feel it was known—known as I knew it would be without any exculpating circumstance, and there was no hope! Could Dr. Long have known all—the temptation—and all the circumstances—he would—at least, I thought a good man like Dr. Long would—have pity, and stretch out a hand to help and save. I thought so, but I might be wrong. But Dr. Long did not know all. And what did I know myself? Nothing. What extenuating circumstances were there? And if there were any, Edgar, I knew, would scorn to avail himself of them. He would rather bear all the shame proudly than attempt to excuse himself. I saw *that* written on his gloomy face at dinner. And then the other alternative—if he went out? What would Dr. Long then think of the plea of illness; would not the real truth strike him? and where would Edgar go to? I thought I knew, and I tried to face the

awful truth. He would go and drown the agony of remorse in deeper sin. It was getting too great for him to bear.

The girl came for baby, and I sat alone in the short twilight of the December day. Every now and then I could hear Edgar's restless footsteps pacing up and down the adjoining room—hurried, rapid, unsteady. He must be prevented meeting Dr. Long that evening, and he must be prevented going out. But how? It grew quite dark and still. I pondered how it was to be done. Then I suddenly kneeled down in the fire-light and asked God, and I learnt how.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

I GOT up from my knees and went upstairs; hastily changed my dress, putting on the darkest one I had, my cloak and a thick veil, and went downstairs and softly called Rawlins into the room.

'Rawlins, I am obliged to go out for a few minutes.'

'In the dark, Miss Maude!' she said; 'and into the town! you cannot do that.'

'Yes, I must. Your master does not know I am going, and I do not want him to know, because he is not fit to go with me; so please don't mention it. I shall be very quick, and soon back.'

'You must not go alone, Miss Maude; master would be so angry if he knew. I will

go with you ; Mary will take good care of baby for a little time.'

'No, Rawlins ; I shall take no harm, and I must go at once. Be sure you answer your master's bell yourself, should he ring ; otherwise, don't let him be disturbed,' and I left Rawlins standing there.

Alas ! I knew Edgar would not ring his bell.

Through the lighted streets I went. Could it be I who, unknown to my husband, was walking alone and unprotected, pushed about briskly by busy people ? I tried not to feel the hot tears which blinded my eyes more than the thick veil I wore. I felt so desolate, so hopeless, so alone.

As I turned into the handsome street where the Grammar School and Dr. Long's house stood, I met numbers of boys walking in groups—eager, happy boys ! such as my boy might one day have grown up to be, had not his father——

As I passed by the principal entrance,

two of the masters, linked arm-in-arm came out, and I heard one say to the other, 'Where is Farren to-day?' 'Ill, the Doctor says,' was the reply; 'must be something very sudden;' and I heard the one who had put the question give a long whistle in reply; they passed on.

For the second time that day I stood before Dr. Long's door, and was admitted. This time not into the library, but into the dining-room. The picture of that room is photographed on my memory; let me describe it.

Ths last week or two the Doctor had adopted the practice of dining in the middle of the day, as he found it facilitated the extra work in the evenings, and tea was now laid on the table. Crimson curtains hung in heavy folds over the three windows; two massive chandeliers lit up the room and made the silver service on the table glitter like mirrors; the wide hearth glowed with heat from a piled-up fire, and the polished steel shone almost

like the silver service; there were seats of crimson velvet on either side of the old-fashioned fireplace.

Dr. Long—the good, noble-looking Doctor—was leaning back in his velvet arm-chair, holding by her two hands a little fairy of some thirteen months who was accomplishing the difficult feat of 'walking up papa.' At the moment I came up to him, she had achieved success, for her red morocco toes were safely placed on his mouth, while a triumphant chorus of, 'She's done it! baby's *walked up* papa!' from the other children, attested her success. A lovely-looking girl of fourteen, who had just recovered from a severe illness, stood by her father's side; three or four others were squatted on the stools or the crimson rug before the fire. Mrs. Long sat opposite in her sewing-chair, watching the scene with perfect content. I saw it all before they saw me. In the happy confusion my entrance had not been perceived.

'My dear, here is Mrs. Farren!' from Mrs. Long, was the first notice the Doctor had of my arrival.

He started up, holding the child in his arms.

'Mrs. Farren! I beg a thousand pardons. I have just come in from the School; and these noisy children make such a hubbub! My dear,' turning to Mrs. Long, 'why don't you teach your children better manners?'

Mrs. Long laughed. 'It is all very well, is it not, Mrs. Farren? but we know who makes the greatest noise of all!'

'Pray be seated,' continued the Doctor; 'I hope Mr. Farren is not worse?'

'He is better, thank you; but, Dr. Long, he is not fit to come out to-night.'

'Most certainly not; I hope he won't think of such a thing. I will come down and see him after tea.'

'Oh, no; thanking you very much; but it is such a cold night for you to turn out,' and I glanced at the children.

'Is it not as cold for you?' said the Doctor, good-humouredly; 'I regret that you should have come out so late.'

'I came, Dr. Long, to ask you to give me some work for Edgar to do this evening. You have so much work to be done just now, and you know he is always troubled when his share is neglected.'

'It shall not be neglected,' said Dr. Long. 'I will see to that; it is only a little extra work for some of us, which we are willing to do for him; and as for his having work at home, now he is ill, I could not think of such a thing for a moment. I hope this is not what has brought you out?'

Mrs. Long had left the room while I was speaking, and taken the elder children with her. From my heart I thanked her. I summoned up all my courage; it was so difficult only to speak the exact truth.

'Dr. Long, you will oblige me more than I can tell you, if you will comply with my request. It is what I have come out to-night

alone and in the dark to ask for, so you may be sure I wished it very much. Edgar has a long evening before him, and such time passes heavily to one accustomed, as he is, to be busily employed. I think, if you will pardon me for saying it, he will be better without company to-night; it might bring on a return of his bad headache. If you would give me some of the compositions and translations to take home, such as he has come the extra evenings lately to attend to, you will do him and myself a great favour, and make us feel less under obligations which we are not able to discharge.'

My voice faltered in spite of every effort. Dr. Long answered not a word. He asked me to go with him into the library, and I followed him there. On the table were numbers of MSS. and papers, which showed me how much work he had left for himself that evening. He selected a number of papers, and, wrapping them up, gave them to me.

'Your husband will quite understand what is to be done with these; and will you tell him from me that, though I shall feel very grieved if he work when he is unfit for it, my own work will be considerably lightened, and I shall feel he has done me a good service if he can bring these corrected to-morrow morning.'

God bless you, Dr. Long!

We went into the hall. 'I will not ask you to see Mrs. Long again,' he said, 'as I know you must be anxious to be at home; otherwise, we should have been pleased if you could have stayed and taken tea with us. But allow me, Mrs. Farren, to see you home. I beg you will.'

'On no account,' I said; 'I could not think of such a thing. Good night,' and I was in the street before Dr. Long could reply.

As fast as I could walk, I hurried home. I almost ran, and, breathless and heated, in a very few minutes I arrived at the house.

I put my package away. I took off my things and went into the parlour. I sat down there alone—still alone. I could not endure it; I brought baby in, and kept him in my arms till tea-time.

When Rawlins had put everything ready for tea, and I had made it, I waited until I heard the nursery door shut, and I knew the servants were safe. I had told Rawlins she might wash baby and put him to bed that night, and she had departed in high glee.

I then went to Edgar's room. I knocked at the door; there was no answer. I knocked again and again—still no answer. I turned the handle—it was locked; but Edgar said, 'Who is there?'

'It is I, Edgar; please open the door,' and he did so.

There was no light in the room; the fire was almost out—only a dull, red glimmering in the grate.

'Edgar, dear,' I said; 'please come—tea is quite ready. Rawlins is putting baby to

bed to-night, and I am quite tired of being alone; please come;' and I put my hand in his, and before he could stop me had lifted up my head and kissed him. He started back.

'I told you, Maude, that I did not want any tea, and did not wish to be disturbed.'

'Your wife never disturbs you, Edgar; and if you do not want any tea, I do; so come, and we will have this room made warm and comfortable for you to do your school work in after tea.'

'School work!' he said; 'I have nothing to do; and I—I shall go out after tea, Maude. You will not mind? I am so tired of being shut up in the house all the day.'

'I know you are,' I said; 'but you will be out to-morrow at the School as usual; and, Edgar, you have some work to do to-night—a great deal; a whole packet of exercise-books and papers to look over, which Dr. Long has sent with a message, that if you are well enough he will feel

under great obligations to you if you will take them corrected to the School to-morrow; these are the very words of his message.'

Edgar stood still, and did not speak. I turned deathly cold. I put my hand into his: 'Feel, Edgar, how cold I am; do let us go out of this room; the other is so warm and comfortable;' and he went with me into the next room.

He mechanically sat down at the tea-table, and I went to the closet and brought out the books. 'See, Edgar, here is work enough; will you be able to manage it? I should think Dr. Long must have found it very inconvenient to-day without you. There are only three days more, are there not, before the examination begins? Will you look at the papers now?' and I left the room, and put coals on his fire, lighted the gas, drew the curtains, and put his slippers to the fire and his evening coat over his easy-chair. When I returned, he was turning over the papers and studying their

contents, and he did so all tea-time. Not once did he look up or speak to me. I was thankful he did not. I could not have borne it; I was afraid I could not hold up much longer, but I did not want him to see that.

He got up directly tea was over—he had not tasted anything, only drunk his tea—and, taking up the papers, said he would attend to them. I took up my work-basket.

'And I may sit with you, Edgar? I will not speak or disturb you in the least?'

'You had better stay here, Maude,' he said.

'No,' I said, 'I shall not stay here;' and I was in his room before him. I saw he paused an instant, irresolute; but I took my place on a foot-stool by the fire, and began my sewing. He came in, leaving the door wide open, drew a chair to the other end of the table, and began to work in silence. I got up and shut the door, and

so the evening passed. Either Dr. Long had given him plenty to do, or Edgar could not manage it as easily as usual, for he seemed to be employed all the time. Once or twice he got up, pushed the hair from his forehead, and began walking up and down the room; he seemed to have forgotten that I was there. I was glad he did, for he might have noticed that I was not sewing—only holding the work in my hand. I could not see a stitch; my eyes were heavy, my head was burning, my hands trembled.

At ten o'clock I went out and brought him in something which I had asked Rawlins to prepare, and a cup of delicious coffee. He only said, 'Thank you.' He drank the coffee, pushed the other food from him, and went on working. It was about half-past ten when he closed the last book, gathered them all together, put his pen and ink away, and, getting up, said, 'I think, Maude, I

will just have a turn out for a breath of fresh air; go to bed, and let no one sit up for me. I will let myself in with my key.'

I went to him; I stood straight before him, and looked into his face:—'Edgar, you must not go out now!'

'*Must* not!' he repeated, angrily. 'Who says I *must* not?'

'I do, Edgar—your wife; the mother of your child. I, who gave up everything, and would now give up everything—life itself—for my husband; I, who at this moment love you more dearly, infinitely more dearly, than I have ever done before.'

'Love me!' he repeated; a bitter smile curled his lip.

'Yes, Edgar; *love* you more than words can tell. And by the great love you bear me—for, Edgar, you *do* love me as much as ever—by that great love, I implore you, my husband, listen to me.'

'This is absurd, Maude! What are you acting heroics for? Surely, I can be trusted

to take a walk out at night! You must not treat me like a child.'

'I do not. You are a man—a man in God's own image; one who can choose between life and death, between Heaven and Hell—and the moment to choose has come! Look at me, Edgar! do you see these heavy, tear-stained eyes, this aching head, these trembling hands? You have done it all—you, my husband—and you can undo it; you can give me back all my happiness; you can put away the remembrance of the past, and be a better man for the future.'

He groaned aloud. 'Never, Maude, never! it is all over! let me go! you know nothing about it.'

'I know the very worst, and I do not shrink from it! I know my husband came home last night intoxicated'—he covered his face with his hands—'and I know that he was driven to it by some worse crime, of which I do not know fully now, but shall do soon. I know that, urged on by

anguish and remorse for that other crime, he forgot all—God, home, love, duty, and his wife, and madly drowned remembrance in drink. I know in his inmost soul he loathes and abhors himself for what he has done, but he shrinks from facing the truth, and so will go on to drink more deeply and sin still more. I know that through all this his wife loves him and clings to him, and will follow him—if need be—even to the very brink of Hell. Edgar, take your choice; do it, if you will; lose body and soul, but you do not go alone! you take me and baby with you in your ruin;—me, whom you promised to love and cherish until death; and baby, to whom you have given life, and with that life a soul which shall live for ever.'

There was a dead silence. Through that silence a prayer went up to God. He heard and answered it.

For full five minutes Edgar stood there. But when I laid my cold hand on his, which were covering his face, he removed

them and looked at me. Did my soul, in a mute, passionate appeal, look through the heavy eyes into which he gazed? I know not; but he turned and went with me.

He scarcely spoke to me again; he seemed like a man in a dream. But I was satisfied.

Whether my husband slept or lay thinking that night, I know not. Heaven was merciful to me, and I sank into a deep, wearied slumber — a slumber from which, though frightful dreams disturbed it, I did not awake until the red sun was pouring his beams in at the windows.

Edgar was up and gone. I looked at my watch. It was half-past eight. I dressed in trembling haste, and when I went downstairs, Edgar stood in the hall preparing to leave. I went up to him; he stooped down, and gravely kissed me.

'I am glad you slept well, Maude. Good-bye.'

'And I shall not have my walk to School with you, Edgar?'

'No; it is better not. Good-bye;' and he was gone! Gone without another word!

But I had much to be thankful for, and I resolutely looked at that. Edgar had not been out the night previously, and he had gone to his usual duties that morning. One step was gained; and whenever the storm of wrecked hopes threatened to overwhelm me that day, I rested on this; I thought of this; I gathered some comfort from this; and I felt that God was more merciful to me than I deserved.

He did not come home to dinner. I knew they were exceedingly busy at the School, so I tried to think that this was the reason. My card of invitation, bearing Dr. Long's signature, had come three weeks before. After the delivery of certain essays and poems, the prizes were to be publicly distributed by the Bishop of the diocese, and there were to be private theatricals and

a supper on the evening of that day. Edgar had taken an active part in all the preliminary arrangements, and I knew that he was going to take no insignificant part in the theatricals. I had been looking forward to it with such pleasure. I wondered, as I sat in my lonely room that day, how Edgar would go through it all now, and I thought of last Christmas! Nothing more could ever bring the exquisite delight, the perfect security, the changeless belief! It was all gone for ever. I was made strong now, through the perfect weakness of love.

The time for Edgar's coming home drew near, and I went towards the School. I met him at the top of the street where the School was; he was walking rapidly, and did not see me; he would have passed me, had I not spoken to him. He exclaimed in astonishment, but I put my hand through his arm, and turned back.

'How is it you are out at this time,

Maude, alone, and in the dark? You must never do so again.'

'I am not alone now, Edgar, and I have not been out or seen you all the day! I was so tired, and longed for a little change. You know I did not get my usual walk with you to School this morning.'

'But that must not make you come out in the dark; you can go out in the middle of the day, and if you do not like going out alone, take Rawlins with you as an attendant.'

'The pleasure of walking out is to be with you, Edgar, and I am not at all afraid of coming alone; are you not glad to see me?'

'Oh, yes; but understand me, Maude—I do not wish it to occur again.'

I did not reply, and not another word was spoken during the walk home.

I went upstairs silently and took my things off. I did not shed one tear. I think my heart was slowly breaking. I think—I

almost think that I could have borne better to see Edgar again as I had seen him *that* night, if he had but awoke from it to speak to me and love me as of old. But this was my woman's weakness, for *this* state of things only involved suffering to myself, the other was sin against God.

I went down to tea. Edgar was walking up and down the room. I saw him before he saw me; his hasty, restless tread had prevented him hearing my footsteps; and the expression of his face—the utter giving-way, the hopeless, despairing wretchedness, I shall never forget. It comforted me a little; so hard, so unmoved was his expression when I was with him, that I had, with horrible dread, begun to ask myself, was it assumed, or was my husband really becoming as hardened as he seemed? When I laid my hand on his he started as if he were summoned to his doom, but in an instant his face assumed its rigid self-command.

'Maude, I—I shall be busy to-night; will

you send my tea into the next room—only tea; I want nothing else.'

'Dear Edgar, do—do have it here with me.'

'No, no; I cannot;' he turned back as he got to the door—'and Maude, do not sit up for me; I may be late; I have a good deal of work, and remember,—I do not wish to be interrupted;' he was gone as he finished speaking.

With a terrible effort I kept baby while the servants had their tea; then Rawlins took him, and I did not see him again until she brought him in for an instant to say, 'Good night.' She then took him away, and I was left alone.

I shall not dwell on that night. The ravages a flood makes is in proportion to the depth and intensity of its waters. My love had been deep, measureless, untamed, unbounded—carrying all before it. Now, it swept unfettered and unrestrained, and there was desolation and ruin in its course.

Nothing disturbed me but the surging of its billows, and they shook my soul to its centre.

Rawlins went to bed as usual at ten. Eleven o'clock struck, and I went my round alone and saw that everything was safe. I crept lightly into Rawlins' room and bent an instant over my boy's cot, and then went down to Edgar's room. I knocked, and he replied, 'Maude, I desired that you would not sit up.' The tone in which the words were uttered, decided me. I felt sure that Edgar was in that state of mind now, that any irritation, or suspicion of being watched, would probably drive him to the very course it was now my life-work to keep him from. I said, 'I only wanted to tell you, Edgar, that I have looked round and all is right. Can I do anything for you before I go?'

'Nothing, Maude,' and I went at once.

I knelt down by my bedside and prayed,—not that God would take my life away,—that

would have been cowardly,—but that He would give me strength to live. From the full depth of human love and woe, I prayed—'By Thy Cross and Passion, by Thine Agony and Bloody Sweat, Good Lord, deliver me!'

I lay awake listening to every sound. Twelve struck; one,—two,—three. Great drops of woe beaded my forehead. What was Edgar doing; what was he suffering; what was he passing through? And I might not be near him; not comfort him; not wrestle and conquer with him. He was alone, and so was I. No, I was not quite alone. In the silent night there came, as had once come before, a dim, strange Vision and a Voice which whispered—as I had once heard Edgar whisper amongst the heavings and battlings of a stormy sea,—'Be not afraid; only believe.'

As the clock struck four, I heard Edgar's door unfastened, and slowly and wearily he came upstairs. As he opened the door, I turned my face to my pillow. Perhaps he

thought I slept; I hope he did, if the thought gave him any comfort, for he needed comfort, and by and by God did send me sleep. I slept as peacefully as a child.

I tried to talk to him the next morning, but he had his paper, and hurried off with scarcely any breakfast. I followed him into the passage, but he had his coat on, and there was nothing to help him with. As he was turning to go, I said, 'Kiss me, Edgar;' and he bent down and did so, gravely, quietly,—as we perform some duty, and he said, 'If I am not home to dinner, Maude, do not wait for me.'

'But will you not send me word?'

'There will be no occasion, as you will know if I am not here at the usual time.'

'Edgar,' I said, trying to speak gaily, 'are you quite sure you know your part perfectly in the theatricals? I am longing to see you act.'

'I shall not take part in them,' he said. 'I told them so yesterday, and they are trying to find someone else; if they cannot, the

parts will go unperformed,' and he left without another word.

I went back into the sitting-room. Mechanically I went up to the little basket where we always put the letters not finished with. I took up my card of invitation and read it through, although I knew all that was on it. I looked at Dr. Long's signature, so firm and bold and characteristic. I laid it down again; I had so fondly looked forward to this entertainment, and pictured a dozen times how my husband would look. What would Dr. Long say? what would they all think of the extreme inconvenience to which Edgar was putting them by his unaccountable conduct? When was it all to end, and what had I yet to bear?

All was utter darkness and I was groping in it.

And the next few days passed just in the same way. Edgar gave me no possible chance of speaking to him. Not one instant when I could do what I was only wait-

ing the chance of doing—go to him and entreat, nay, insist upon knowing all;—anything, everything, that the darkest forebodings could depict would be nothing to this. If I might know all, I could bear all, and help him to bear it. For days, Edgar had never seen, never asked for baby; he had scarcely spoken to, scarcely looked at me. Every hour of my existence had been absolute torture: there must be a limit to human endurance, and I thought the limit had been reached.

The last day of the term came. In spirit, I think I was as strong as ever, but in body, I was utterly weary and broken down. I had never had five minutes with Edgar when I could speak to him. The constant excuse was—it was but an excuse, I knew—extra work. But to-day it would all be over;—what then? How would Edgar evade me then; how employ his time; how would Christmas Day find us; would he have broken through his fierce barrier of self-

restraint and tell me what deeper sin had been haunting him for weeks; or would he drown the recollections which could not be borne, by plunging deeper and deeper into sin?

It was an awful question, and an anguished cry for pity rose from my heart to Heaven. And Heaven heard and answered. But how?

CHAPTER XXXV.

EDGAR had left me on the morning of the last day of the term ; it was on Friday, the 23rd. It was Dr. Long's particular request that all the masters would be present at the supper that evening, as he was anxious that the amusements should be kept within bounds.

I think it must have been about three o'clock on that day—I am not sure, for I do not know how the hours passed. I was sitting on a low stool before the fire, covering my face with my hands. I felt nothing and I heard nothing, and yet it seemed to me that I was conscious of some presence, and I looked up. Edgar was standing by me, his hand was on my shoulder. Then it was not fancy—I *had* felt a touch. I had

not heard him come in, and I looked absently up in his face. I saw a bitter spasm of pain pass over it, but he hid it by stooping down and kissing me.

'Maude, dear'—it was his voice and words, not exactly as of old, but something—something of the lost tenderness in them!

'Maude, dear!' and I lifted up my face and wept.

He put his arm round me—not with the old touch, and yet it *was* Edgar's arm. He smoothed my hair, but seemed not to know what to say. Had my childish weakness grieved him; had I done harm and checked him? The thought was sufficient. I ceased crying, and pressed my hands tightly together to keep back the choking sensation; I even tried to smile.

'I thought you were at the School, Edgar; you have left early.'

'Yes.'

'Are you come to spend the afternoon

with me, Edgar; and then go back for the supper? Oh, I am so glad, so glad!'

'Are you?'

'Yes, Edgar; don't you think I am? I have seen nothing of you lately.'

He turned away, and walked about the room. What did it mean? Had he made up his mind to tell me? It was all I asked. I went up to him.

'Edgar, have you not something to tell me?'

Without looking at me, he said, 'Yes, Maude; I have.'

'Thank God, Edgar! thank God! I can bear anything but this suspense. Oh, Edgar!'—but I would not tell him what I had suffered; it might seem like reproach—'will you not tell me all? I can bear anything but your coldness. You will see how well I can bear it, if you will tell me.'

'Poor Maude! can you bear it?' and with a sudden change of voice to an agony of self-condemnation, he said, 'Oh, Maude!

if you would but curse me, I should thank you!' but recovering himself in a moment he added, 'I have had a telegram from Dr. Vanny.'

My hopes fell; I wanted to know nothing about Dr. Vanny. I wanted to know what had come between my husband and me; but I would be patient.

'Well, Edgar,' I said, 'he said he would write in a week to settle business matters; I am glad he has written to you.'

'But this is not a letter, Maude; it is a telegram; and Dr. Vanny would not telegraph unless it were a most urgent matter. It is from Stonecross, and he would not telegraph from there, unless——'

I knew it all! Without another word, I knew it all! Gypsie—my little brother was dying—was dead! With the speed and clearness of lightning, it was all before me.

I neither fainted nor exclaimed. I neither wept nor turned cold. I had learnt to endure. Suffering was nothing new to me. I had gained great strength the last few days.

I turned to my husband. 'Let us go, Edgar; it is kind of Dr. Vanny to send for us; it is kind of—of Papa. Let us go to Gypsie.'

Edgar stood amazed: did he think I should have given way? The fact of death is terrible—the fact of life is sometimes far more terrible. He did not move, and I steadily went up to the bell and rang it.

When Rawlins appeared, Edgar roused himself; he put me down gently on the sofa.

'Rawlins, your mistress has to leave directly; she has had bad news from Stonecross; will you put up her things as quickly as possible? Bring in some water, and, Maude, I will get you some brandy, and then you will feel better.'

Rawlins did not stay to ask questions; she brought the water, and gave it to Edgar. I heard her whisper, 'What is it, sir?' and Edgar only replied, 'Gypsie,' and then went to the sideboard for the brandy. He searched in vain; he could not find any.

He poured me out a glass of wine, and brought it to the sofa. I took it from his hand; then, quick as thought, slipped to the window, threw it open, emptied the wine out, shut the window, and stood before Edgar. He flushed a violent flush over brow and cheeks, but turned away without a word.

'Can I help you to pack up, Maude, or arrange anything? Your train leaves very soon.'

'*My* train! You are going with me, Edgar?'

'No. I—I think there will be no need, Maude. I will secure a first-class carriage for you, and will fee the guard well to attend to you. Dr. Vanny or someone will be sure to meet you, and drive you to Stonecross. You will be safe there, Maude, safer——' He stopped.

I went up to my husband, and put my hand on his arm. I looked into his face. 'Edgar, I am not fit to travel by myself a long journey like that, and I will not go to

Stonecross alone. It is fitting that when I go there, my husband should be with me.'

'This is all childish nonsense, Maude! There can be no doubt about your managing the journey, with the arrangements I shall make for you. You will probably not see your father at all; he is too much incensed. You will stay at Dr. Vanny's house. It is he who has sent for you, and you will only see him.'

'Edgar, I cannot go alone; and if I could, I would not. I shall not leave you; if you do not go, I shall not go; if you stay, I shall stay.'

My husband looked at me. Something in my face must have touched his heart. He yielded.

'I will go, Maude. Be quick and get ready, but mind—I will never sleep one night under your father's roof.'

I left the room. The present was all I had to do with, and that was gained. In an hour's time, Edgar and I were on our way to ——shire.

My recollections of that journey are so confused and obscure, that I cannot now recall anything clearly. The events of the past week—the utter change—the awful facts—each minute incident connected with their occurrence are written ineffaceably on my heart. But when we had left Mannerton, when my husband and I were on our way to the home I had never believed I should see again, I think I sunk into a kind of stupor. I was conscious of one or two things, and that was all.

I was conscious that Gypsie—my Gypsie—my mother's charge—was dying—perhaps dead. And I had not seen him. No loving recognition, no sweet farewell, no tender kiss, no unspoken forgiveness, might ever pass between us! Where Gypsie was going—had gone—there was no tear hot enough to penetrate, no hand strong enough to reach, no love deep enough to pierce!

I was conscious of something else. Through all, a dim, brooding, unexplained

sense of Mercy stole. Edgar was being brought away from Mannerton, at the very moment when to stay might have been ruin to body and soul. We were going where he had first learned to love me; where he had lived and spoken the truths once so dear to him; where Gypsie had loved him, and strengthened his belief in all that was holy and good. And I was now with my husband alone—and with him under the brooding sense, the awful consciousness of Death; and under that stern presence no shams could exist—that unpitying hand swept away all disguises. *There* the soul was robbed of all pretences, and stood unmasked and shelterless. Before that powerful King, the spirit which possessed my husband might be cast out. Death might stand before him, and stop his way to Hell. And, as I thought of this, my heart laid itself down before One, who again came unto me and whispered, 'I have the keys of Hell and of Death.' Then He could shut, and He could save!

And for Gypsie? If *this* were life—it was well for him. Well, that out of its unbroken sweetness, he should go, as he once had said to me, 'to feel what God's arms were like!' Gypsie would find there a surer resting-place than earth's smoothest paths; *there* he would only know the gentle rockings of Love—not the heavings and tossings of the seething billows of time.

There he would hear, as he had once told me he would like to hear, 'the bells of Heaven ring,' and blending with their harmony would never be one note of woe. Gypsie would change the chimes of Earth, which to him had been ever sweet, for the far sweeter chimes of Heaven. Before one touch of sin had darkened that fair face, it would be lifted up in the full sunlight of God's smile, and dwell there for evermore! Better—far better for Gypsie! Fitting end to such a life! Crowning mercy of God's goodness, that He should take my darling, before he grew 'very tired.' Yes; it was

better for Gypsie! I shed no tear for him!

I think Edgar was very kind to me, but I have a very faint recollection of anything, except my own thoughts. I felt somebody was caring for me. I was kept warm and comfortable; no one else came into the carriage. I was made to lie down, and told to try and sleep. When Edgar desired me, I got out and got in; and the hours passed. Our train arrived at its destination at twelve. I had slept heavily the last three hours, and I started up to hear Edgar say, 'We are just there; you must get up now, Maude,'—he did not say 'Maude dear,'—the sentence seemed incomplete; he lingered over the last word, and said no more.

I sat up; I was wide awake, and shivered all over, but I was not cold. Edgar had wrapped me up too well for that.

He busied himself in gathering our rugs and shawls together, and then sat down, and there was not a word spoken. Edgar sat

with his hand over his eyes and his elbow on his knee.

Another moment or two and our tickets were taken, and then the next thing I knew was, that Dr. Vanny had hold of my hand and was helping me out of the train.

He drew my hand through his arm. 'Mr. Farren, will you see to the luggage while I put Maude into the carriage; mine is waiting;' and he put me in and left me. In a few moments he and Edgar appeared at the door.

'Step in, Mr. Farren,' and Edgar obeyed. I expected Dr. Vanny would follow; instead of that, with a hasty, 'I ride outside,' he shut the door, and before Edgar could open it or speak to him, we were driving off.

Edgar sat down beside me, and by some unchecked impulse put his arm round me.

'Yes, Maude; Gypsie is alive, and Dr. Vanny trusts he will be able to speak to you. Poor Maude!' and my husband kissed me.

No other words passed during the two

miles' drive. The moment we stopped, Dr. Vanny lifted me out; and my husband followed and we went up the broad flight of steps together.

The carriage had been heard by a watchful servant, and the door was opened before we reached it. There my husband halted.—'Dr. Vanny, I do not go in! I will leave Maude in your care. I shall find lodgings in the village.'

We were standing under the outer lamp. Dr. Vanny looked thunderstruck. Such an obstacle was so totally unexpected—so far from his thoughts at the moment, that his temper rose.

'The devil take your confounded pride!' he said—but in an instant a flood of remembrance changed his tone: he laid his hand on Edgar's arm and said, in those deep, persuasive tones, which only those who had known Dr. Vanny in the deeper crises of life would have believed it possible for him to use, 'Mr. Farren, death sweeps all thoughts

of self away; all men are equal where Gypsie will soon be; it is no time for anger or pride; you must bring neither in here. Go in.'

And Edgar went in.

Dr. Vanny led us into a room where a table was spread. He closed the door upon me and left us there. He opened it again to say, 'See that your wife takes something,' and went. Edgar seemed neither to hear or to see. He seemed oblivious of my presence; he seemed unconscious of everything but his own bitter thoughts. That was the room where Gypsie used to have his lessons. I looked up and saw that it was unchanged. It was the room where Edgar had had his interview with Papa; from where he had quitted the house, as he thought, for ever. My husband's face was ashy pale; his lips compressed; his hands firmly locked together. So Dr. Vanny had left him, and so Dr. Vanny found him. He glanced at him when he re-entered the room, but did not

speak. I had taken off my things and laid them on the sofa; Edgar had still his coat and gloves on; he had only taken his hat off, to restlessly push his hair back. Dr. Vanny went up to him and took his coat and gloves off, and Edgar submitted without a word. He then linked his arm through Edgar's, and, turning to me, said, 'Maude, you are a brave, good girl; follow me;' and he went on with Edgar upstairs.

Was I 'brave'; was I 'good'? Had I in very truth become so through suffering?

There was no sound in the house. Dr. Vanny stopped at the door of a room—once mine! He led Edgar in, and I followed. There was no movement; no one looked up as we entered. I saw three people; one on each side of the bed—Papa and Aunt Gretta; and a nurse sitting by the fire.

Dr. Vanny led Edgar up to Papa, and left him there; and they two—they stood side by side. He took my hand and put me on the other side of the bed, by Aunt Gretta. He

went to the bottom of the bed himself and stood there. And then I looked and saw—Gypsie. Mine still! Chiselled in marble, moveless, silent—but still mine! A little while death lingered;—delayed a little longer! A short space, a brief moment, to let me have one dying memory of my Gypsie to hoard up for ever. No; not for ever. Only till Gypsie shall meet me on the threshold, and say 'Sister Maude.'

Hour slipped into hour. No change, no movement, no sign! Aunt Gretta was sitting down. Dr. Vanny leant against the bed. Papa and Edgar stood exactly as they had done at first. I knelt down and watched—watched for one smile, one look, one ray from the sweet soul ere it passed. It came!

Dr. Vanny removed the shade, and carried the lamp to the bed, held it in the face of the sleeper, took it back, extinguished the light, gently drew up the Venetian blind and a ray of crimson light falling in, told me it was morning. The night had passed away.

Gypsie stirred—moved ; the lips trembled, the eyelids quivered—unclosed ; and the blue eyes looked out from the veiled soul—not dim, not unseeing ; but lustrous, shining, wonderful ! Those eyes fell on me ; they deepened—intensified—recognised me ! The little hands were stretched out—'Maude! Sister Maude!'

'Gypsie ! Little Gypsie.'

So close, so loving, so intense the embrace, it seemed as if the parting soul had summoned up all her strength to meet the need which his love required. Was it not strong enough to arrest the King ? No ; and better not, my Gypsie ! Safer and better to be with God !

The little arms loosened, and I laid him gently down on the pillow. He turned to the other side ; there was no weakness, no languor, it was a bright kindling just before the total darkness.

'Mr. Farren!' Both hands were held out. But Edgar stood as one turned to stone. He neither spoke nor moved.

A cloud dimmed the bright face: his thoughts flew back to other days. 'Have I been naughty, Mr. Farren? Are you angry with me?'

Papa looked up: his eyes fell on Edgar —Edgar's fell on him.

A wonderful light came over Gypsie's face, and the shadow passed before it. He saw and understood. A strange consciousness lit up his eyes; he raised himself in bed, and held out a hand to each.

'Papa, you were angry with Mr. Farren! I remember it. Will you forgive him? It is so nice to forgive!'

No sound, no word, no whisper; and still the little hands were held out, while the face lit up more and more with a glory all divine. 'Papa, God is waiting for me, and I am going; and He will ask me if you have forgiven Mr. Farren; what shall I say?'

No word, no answer, no whisper. Only more and more light on Gypsie's face.

'Papa!'

'My boy! my boy!'

'Mr. Farren.'

Edgar's head drooped, and an agony of hot tears and hotter kisses were rained over the little hands; 'Gypsie, dear Gypsie!'

'Papa, forgive Mr. Farren. I am waiting and God is waiting.'

'I forgive him, Gypsie, with all my heart and soul, as I pray God to forgive me!'

'Mr. Farren, forgive Papa!'

'I have nothing to forgive. God be merciful to me a sinner.'

'Kiss,' said Gypsie.

And they kissed. The old man and the young. Both sinned against—both sinning.

And Gypsie lay back upon his pillows—sinking now; the strange, unearthly excitement past; the last gleam faded; the bright light going out.

'Blessed are the peacemakers.' And Gypsie was 'blessed,' for he 'saw God.'

CHAPTER XXXVI.

I OPENED my eyes. I sat up and tried to think. I looked round the room. I knew it; it was a little room, familiarly called 'Aunt Gretta's dressing-room.' I was lying on the couch there. I raised myself up on my elbow. My head felt confused; but still I remembered—remembered enough to explain where I was, and how I came there.

I stirred the caked fire, and by its bright light looked at my watch. I sat down before the fire and thought. I had not been sitting very long, when the door opened, and some one came in. It was Dr. Vanny. He drew up the easy-chair to where I sat, put his hand on my head, and said, 'Poor Maude; poor child! I loved your mother, Maude.'

I could bear no more. I wept long and passionately; tears came now, fast as 'summer tempests.' I wept till I could weep no more.

'You must have something to eat, Maude,' said Dr. Vanny. He left the room, and presently returned with something. It seemed that I could not touch it, but Dr. Vanny's 'Eat it directly' was not to be disobeyed. The wine I would not touch. He insisted. I took the glass and emptied the contents into the fire.

I believe he thought that my head was affected. 'Do you know what you are doing, Maude?' he asked.

'Quite well, Dr. Vanny; better than you do.'

'What is the meaning of such nonsense?'

'Dr. Vanny, where is my husband?'

'What is the matter with your husband?' he asked.

'Is he ill?' I started up; 'why did you not tell me? let me go to him directly.'

'Sit down, child; who said he was ill?

though what *is* the matter with him passes my comprehension, and I generally know what is the matter with people, even when they don't themselves.'

'Where is he, Dr. Vanny?'

'In my room; the room appropriated to me since I have been here, day and night.'

'Dr. Vanny, when did——'

'I will tell you all, Maude. There is not much to be told. When I returned from being with you, I found Gypsie much altered; the next day decided the case—he had typhoid fever. He was a very delicate child, and lately he had lost much strength; what I had always dreaded for him had come—a severe illness; it prevailed, and he sank. There have been two physicians here besides myself, but the case was hopeless—almost from the beginning. I should have sent for you sooner, but—you know why. At last, I did it on my own responsibility. It will almost kill your father. Every hope of his life was centred in Gypsie. He has

never had any sorrow that could shake him out of himself, or shake his pride out of him. This will do both. He has never left Gypsie from the first; and when I told him it was hopeless, he told me he *should not* die. I fear he is stricken as Gypsie was; but he is strong, and may come through. You must nurse him: you must attend to him; you must save him, if love and kindness can do it.'

'I?'

'Yes, you; you need not be afraid.'

'I did wrong, Dr. Vanny.'

'I know you did, child; but God forgives sin.'

There was a very long silence. It was broken by Dr. Vanny.

'Maude, I want to speak to you about your husband. There is something wrong with Edgar. Do you know about it, and what it is?'

'Why do you ask that, Dr. Vanny?'

'Do not evade me, child; but answer me.'

Could I? should I? The dead was safe—safe with God. No need of the agony of prayer for them; but the living—the living! Could I save my husband's soul, and how? It seemed to me that Edgar hovered between Heaven and Hell. Would any deed of mine hasten him thither; would any mistake on my part hurry him—where? The stillness grew awful,—intolerable. Dr. Vanny broke it.

'Maude, were it not that I feel that this is something beyond the ordinary matter of young folk's quarrels, you might fight it out for ever. But it is nothing of this kind. There is some hidden cause at work; I judge by results. Edgar is a changed man. I had my suspicions at Mannerton—not of your happiness, child, mind that. I saw you were happy, but I knew you were blind. I was not satisfied with Edgar; I was perplexed, and I grew suspicious. To have said as much to you then, would have been mere folly; you were blind, I say, and therefore you could not see. You see now—the scales

have fallen from your eyes. You are both changed—your change is a calm preparedness for all that may come; Edgar's is a wild struggle for escape. Tell me what it is, child; tell me all about it. I will be silent as the grave. He has been raving in my room like a madman; raving about you, about some sin committed; about having deceived you, and blasted yours and your child's name; about Dr. Long, and some night a week ago, when he broke your heart. He did not know what he was saying; it was an agony of grief and despair, caused by Gypsie's words. Now he has recovered himself, and is wrapped in impenetrable reserve. I can make nothing of him. I took care no one should see him but myself; he has been in my room all day. He has never once asked for you, although he saw you carried out fainting from *that* room. Maude, what is the meaning of all this? do you know? If you do, tell me, and if there be help for him or you on God's earth, you shall have it."

And I told Dr. Vanny all.

It was late when Dr. Vanny got up to leave me. I had been asleep most of the day, under the influence of a powerful sleeping draught. He would not let me go downstairs, nor yet to Edgar; but said I was to remain where I was, until he sent Aunt Gretta to me. 'Be brave, Maude,' he said, 'and we shall pull him and you through this trouble, whatever it may be; and as for *that* night, I judge him most tenderly—not the sin, but him. What despair and self-reproach urged him on to it, I can form some idea by his suffering now. What is behind it all, I know not; but there is no sin too black to be repented of. Remember, Maude, I told you I would be as silent as the grave, and I will.'

How good you were, Dr. Vanny, how very good!

When Aunt Gretta came to me that evening she put her arms round me, and we wept together: gentle, sorrowful, womanly tears. She poured out her full heart; it did

her good to talk and it did me good to listen. When she took me to the bedroom which I was to have, I found everything was arranged for my convenience.

'I think your husband is still in Dr. Vanny's room, my dear; dear, dear! no wonder, Maude, I am all confused and trembling, and cannot see after anything as I should do, but I hope, my dear, I hope you will find all comfortable and everything you need, and Becket has nothing at all to do but to wait on you, if only you will ring the bell the moment you want anything; of course, I mean, if Mr. Farren will do it for you; dear, dear! so kind and attentive as he always was, and so fond of Gypsie!' and Aunt Gretta began to sob again.

'How is Papa to-night?' I asked.

'I am afraid he is worse than we know of, my dear. Dr. Vanny means to spend the night in his room; and the nurse—you remember your old nurse, Maude, whom you were so fond of?'

'What nurse?'

'Why, have you forgotten, Maude, when you were so ill! dear, dear! but you young folks think no more of it as soon as you are better! I always did say ——'

'Do you mean Mrs. Nilson, Aunt Gretta?'

'Of course. You remember Dr. Vanny brought her, and how fond you were of her; dear, dear! but you have had so much to think of, poor child!'

'Was it Mrs. Nilson sitting by the fire in —that—that room?'

'Yes; did you not know her?'

No, I had known nothing but one thing!

Aunt Gretta was leaving the room when it occurred to me to ask, 'Where are Charlotte and Maggie? where has Maggie been all day?'

'Maggie, my dear! You don't mean to say you don't know!'

'Know what, Aunt Gretta?'

'Why, Maude! don't you know that Maggie is married?'

'Married! Maggie married! Aunt Gretta, you are joking, are you not?'

'Joking, Maude, joking! and to-day! How could you say such a thing?' Aunt Gretta looked as grieved as her amiable nature would permit.

I kissed her. 'Forgive me, please; I did not mean to grieve you. Married! When, and to whom?'

'Why really, Maude! but of course, poor child, how should you know! still, I thought you would have heard. To be sure, as I said, I forgot, and that things should happen so; one after another, to be sure, or rather all together, in such a lump: oh dear! oh dear! and I am afraid no one has attended to Mr. Farren! oh, what a day, ever to happen!'

'Dear Aunt Gretta, will you tell me whom Maggie has married?'

'Why, Maude! whom should she marry?

But of course, not that I particularly admired him, but then if Maggie did, as I said again and again to your Papa when we received yours and Mr. Farren's letters, and oh, Maude, what a day that was! To be sure, I remember, but then, don't think, my dear, I ever mean for one moment to compare him to Mr. Farren, because I never did, my dear. I don't think the two are fit to be compared; such a fine, manly-looking young man as Mr. Farren was; though I can't say I think him looking at all well now, Maude,—just the glimpse I had of him; you know, to be sure, it was but a look, but when the eye is accustomed to detect symptoms at the first glance, as mine is, dear, dear! as I said again and again to your father, Maude, that I was quite sure dear Gypsie,—but your father was so angry Maude, so very angry, whenever I ventured to hint at such a thing; I had never in my life seen him more angry except when,—oh, Maude, it was terrible his anger when your letters came to Cheltenham!

and I did, indeed I did, Maude, say to him even then,—I wonder now I come to think of it, I could be so bold,—but I did say even then——'

'Aunt Gretta,' I interrupted—I had tried to wait very patiently, 'Aunt Gretta, will you tell me the name of Maggie's husband?'

'Bless me, Maude! why don't you know and I've been telling you all this time, and you used to go out walking at Scarborough with both him and Captain Marshall. You remember poor Captain Marshall? It's my belief that his disappointment preyed so on his health that he has never been the same man since!'

'She has not married Captain Snuffins?' I exclaimed, with a sudden leap back of my thoughts to the Spa at Scarborough, and the morning when that illustrious young man so eminently distinguished himself thereon.

'Of course she has; and though, as I said at the time, Maude, my dear, there can be no objection to him on the ground of family or

fortune, for you know he is the son of a baronet and will have a large property, still, to do it in that way, when she might have had such an elegant trousseau all prepared like Charlotte's, if she would only have waited until your Papa relented!'

'Did Maggie do it without Papa's consent?' I asked.

'Of course she did, my dear, although it is all made up now, as there can be no objection, as I said, on the ground of family or fortune; and to think you should never have known! It was when she stayed at Harrogate last season with the ——, and we never knew until it was all over; oh dear, oh dear! and of course Dr. Vanny wrote to them to tell them about dear little Gypsie, but Captain Snuffins thought they had better not come until we saw how the case turned; he had such a dread of infection; but of course now they will come for the — oh dear, oh dear!'

'Where is Charlotte?' I said.

'Why my dear! dear, dear, that it should happen so! Charlotte's baby is only four days old, and only yesterday afternoon Mr. Retnor was telegraphed for; his eldest brother is thought to be dying. How things do come altogether! I said so when the telegram came, for Mr. Retnor was here at the time; he has been with Gypsie and your Papa a great deal —I said that a hurried journey like that was enough to ——'

'Dear Aunt Gretta!' I said, 'will you excuse me, but I am very tired.'

'Poor child, poor child! of course you are; how thoughtless of me! but I will bring you some globules, Maude, and then ——'

'Not to-night, Aunt Gretta! I just want to be left. I will take them in the morning; please don't let me be disturbed again to-night,' and Aunt Gretta trotted out of the room, at last.

Maggie had chosen her lot with Captain Snuffins,—then she must take it with all it brought. Whatever it brought she could not

suffer; she had no capabilities of suffering; nay, she might be very happy—as happy as she had always been! I thought no more of Maggie that night.

I took my dress off and put a dressing-gown on. I heard the hall-clock strike twelve. I could not rest. I thought I should not encounter anyone. The servants most likely would be worn out with broken rest; no one would hear me. From what Dr. Vanny had said Edgar would be sleeping in his room, and Dr. Vanny himself would be with Papa. I opened my door and listened—not a sound. With noiseless steps, I crossed the wide corridor to that door—the door of my old room; the room from where Gypsie had gone to God—the room where he had once stayed my hands from madly sending my stained soul into its Maker's presence. I turned the key, and opened the door; closed it behind me and entered.

The room was not dark. Two shaded

night-lamps at the foot of the bed stood on two small stands, covered with white. They cast a dim, hastened light over the room, but especially there—where Gypsie lay—as beautiful as I had ever seen him in life. Entranced by his loveliness, Death had forgotten to leave one harsh trace to mar it. The golden curls swept the marble forehead; the long lashes scarcely touched the cheek; the lips seemed formed as if to whisper again 'Forgive;' and the little hands were folded on his breast, as I had seen them many a time folded in prayer. Mine, still mine!—

> Not dead, not sleeping,—not e'en gone,
> But present still;
> And waiting for the coming hour
> Of God's sweet will.

Rocked in 'God's arms.' Lulled and soothed There, as even 'Sister Maude' could never have done Here, he felt what 'they were like,' and was 'satisfied.' And I was satisfied;—quite satisfied. I knelt down and thanked God, who had given me what I once thought would be the keenest agony I could suffer.

I thanked God, who had taken my Gypsie from passing peace Here to everlasting peace There.

I do not know how long I knelt there, but I was with him—with my darling, beholding the face of the Father in Heaven, and pleading for those who yet remained. I heard the door open, and someone came in with a hesitating step ;—noiselessly, stealthily, as if afraid to enter. The door was shut again, and I knew my husband was in the room.

He did not see me. The white curtains of the bed rested on my white dressing-gown and hid me. He paused at the foot of the bed ; he passed on to the other side ; he gazed long—silently—fixedly, and then with one smothered cry—a cry which might have come from a lost soul when its doom was about to be sealed—he sank down by the side of Gypsie.

I rose up and glided round the bed. I knelt down by Edgar. I put my arm round him and whispered, ' Edgar ; God is

waiting to forgive.' My touch shook him from head to foot; he wept like a child, and we wept together.

A little time passed, and he grew calmer; there was perfect silence in the room. I broke it.

'Speak to me, Edgar,' I said, 'speak to me once more.' And he did; there, in the still presence of our Gypsie, who was gone to God, Edgar told me all.

I shall put what my husband said in as few words as possible, because his self-reproach was so bitter, that I cannot bear to think of what he suffered.

Edgar's income could not cover our expenses. For the first six months all was right, because he had some money saved from former years, which went to meet our requirements. Then he began to be pressed for money, and borrowed—at a large interest, and thoughtlessly—thoughtlessly—it was only that then—put the matter from him, and gave promissory notes for repayment, thinking

that somehow matters would right themselves—we should be able to save more—it was just at first expenses were so much, and his salary would be raised. If it had been raised it would not have met the demand, for expenses did *not* decrease, and he had again to take money on a ruinous interest. He had fallen into the hands of a sharper—a man to whom he had been driven by his determination for secresy and a desire to keep a knowledge of the true state of the case from ever reaching me or Dr. Long.

It was before this time that Dr. Long had applied to Edgar to gain information for him about his brother, who had been obliged to leave the country. Edgar had gained the desired information from his friend in Australia, and on Dr. Long finding that his brother really was steady and was endeavouring to retrieve his lost character, but was often in want of even the necessaries of life, the good man's heart yearned towards him, and he placed in Edgar's hands a cheque

for two hundred pounds to be by him transmitted to his friend, to be paid by instalments at his friend's discretion, to young Long, if he still continued steady.

He had several reasons for going about the matter in this way. He was afraid that if his brother once knew that his family were aware of his position and occupation, his pride would revolt, and he would leave the place to go somewhere where he was not known, or perhaps sink again into those habits which had been his ruin. The money was to be given as from a friend who had known young Long in better days, and who was now anxious to help him, without the knowledge that any more remained to give. Should the first gift of money really encourage and help him, and more have the same effect, the residue was to be given for the purpose of helping him on to a farm, and if he were successful, then Dr. Long would send out further assistance, and his brother would be told from whom the money came,

and Dr. Long would himself receive from him the acknowledgment of the whole sum. Edgar's friend was well fitted to act in this matter, being an old resident, now an influential and wealthy one, and one who had made his own way in the country, and therefore was able to guide another.

And thus Dr. Long hoped to save one who had sunk to a terrible depth of sin in his own country, but for whom there yet availed, the 'effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man.'

That Dr. Long should have chosen my husband as his agent in this matter showed what entire confidence he reposed in him. That it should never have occurred to him that Edgar could be pressed for money, and that thus he was putting a terrible temptation in his way, was natural, as, having known Papa and Mamma, he was aware that I had a claim upon money, from my Mother's side alone. And I am persuaded, that from the opinion which I had heard him at times

express about Papa, he would not have the faintest idea that he could carry his anger so far as to disown me because I had married without his consent. A remark which Dr. Long made to Edgar, showed what he thought of this matter. He was regretting that Edgar's salary could not be raised that year, owing to the lawsuit, as he had hoped it would have been, but he added, 'I am glad to know, Farren, that this will not affect you now; your wife's property will secure to you and yours every comfort.' Edgar made no reply, and the subject was not renewed.

Then came my illness and baby. For nearly a week my life hung in the balance; and what must the expenses of that time have been, to say nothing of Edgar's trouble? Another physician was called in; the nurse was one of the best that could be had, and when I began to recover I knew that everything that love could suggest, or money could buy, was around me.

And it was then that the fierce temptation came to Edgar, and he fell.

It was during this time that letters arrived from Australia with news of young Long;—letters which Edgar at once gave to Dr. Long for him to consider how to act. The consequence of that consideration was, that he adopted the course I have mentioned. The cheque for two hundred pounds was payable at a bank in Mannerton, the bank, where Dr. Long transacted business, and at a branch bank in Australia. Terrible combination of circumstances! At that time Dr. Long's daughter was lying dangerously ill—at the very crisis which might issue in life or death. Dr. Long was anxious the money should be sent out immediately, under the care of a Captain, whom he knew, and who was on the eve of sailing for Australia. He informed Edgar of all the particulars at that very dinner which Edgar took with him just before my illness, when I thought the 'business' might be to tell Edgar of his

salary being raised. Dr. Long handed over the cheque to Edgar, casually mentioning at the time where it was payable, and giving him a letter to inclose in his own to his friend, containing directions as to the manner in which he wished the money to be given ; apologising at the same time for the trouble he was giving Edgar, but pleading the unusual circumstances of the case. Edgar promised to execute the commission. It was no new thing ; Dr. Long had several times employed Edgar to transact business for him, and occasionally employed him as his private secretary.

Of course, when Edgar left the Doctor's it was too late to do any business that evening. He came home and laid the papers by, to be attended to as soon as possible. Before he left the next morning, I was taken ill. He did nothing with the papers that day, and then remembering them, he wrote a hasty note to his friend, and took them to post to the Captain, on his

way to the School the next morning. Just as he was starting, a strange man called—not strange, alas! to Edgar. It was the professional money-lender, to whom Edgar had become indebted. Some nefarious proceedings had been discovered, and he needed money at once to meet the demand before he left the town. The bills had fallen due some days before, but the matter had escaped Edgar's memory as to the exact date, as he did not doubt that he should still be able to be accommodated. The man refused any further accommodation, and insisted upon immediate payment, or Mr. Farren must take the consequences. And the consequences were—a seizure for debt, and a personal application to Dr. Long, as the head of the establishment in which Edgar was.

Had Edgar but been calm enough at the moment to bravely face the consequences and abide the result, all might have come right, for surely Dr. Long would at least

have been patient and forbearing had he confessed all and asked his help; and also, had not a wrong and mistaken notion of sensitive pride withheld him from seeing that in all honesty his wife's property, or a portion of it, was his; but the way in which we had been married held him back here, and if he thought of it at all, it only served to arouse his pride, and make him resolve to do anything rather than acknowledge himself to be in a position to need the money. It was my fault, all mine! I had brought it all on him!

At the moment the fellow was admitted into the house, Edgar was leaving for the School; his hat was on, and in his hand the papers—the parcel of papers which he was that day going to send off! As he stood there,—the man before him with his threat of instant payment or instant exposure,—Edgar thought of his wife, his child, his situation, and the disgrace! And at that very moment his eye fell upon the papers in his hand. The way was as clear

as a sunbeam—every circumstance pointed to it! He would repay the money somehow; it would be but for a very short time; no human being would ever know how it was to be sent out and when—and Edgar yielded! Without time for thought or reflection, without seeing how the devil was trying to checkmate his soul, he yielded. Intoxicated for a moment by the sudden sight of a way to escape out of his horrible position, he sternly ordered the man from the house, promising that his claims should be satisfied by two o'clock, and the man left.

As soon as he was at liberty, Edgar hurriedly left the School, accomplished the business, placed the money in the man's hands, returned to the School, and then——

That night he realised what he had done! Where was his chance of repaying? how was he to meet the claim? what was he to do?'

Night and day his sin haunted him; ever present, ever torturing.

Then I recovered. Some weeks passed, and Dr. Vanny came. Too late, too late! Edgar's fears and pride were both roused by Dr. Vanny's questions; even his common-sense must have forsaken him, or he would have seen that now he could repay the money; he would not listen to the Doctor's statements; fearful of Dr. Vanny's suspicions, he took refuge in pride and haughtiness, and sternly refused to touch a penny of my 'accursed money.' No wonder that Dr. Vanny was grieved and irritated at his unreasonable objections, and hasty words passed between them. Lashed by Dr. Vanny's keen enquiries, and cutting remarks, and half-implied reproaches, he refused to allow any more discussion of his private matters, and the Doctor and he parted in anger.

You did not know, Dr. Vanny! Had you known how the man whom you judged so obstinate and wilful, was writhing under a withering sense of sin, goaded by a torture

you little dreamt of, you would not have so harshly condemned my poor Edgar!

In the morning Edgar would not meet Dr. Vanny. He passed the day in a state of feeling which almost drove him desperate, not knowing what Dr. Vanny would say to me, or how far his suspicions had been aroused. At night a young man—a junior master recently come to the School, and whom Dr. Long has since summarily dismissed—induced Edgar to go with him to dine at an hotel and meet some of his convivial friends there. Is the devil never weary of being on the watch? Edgar had, without the least hesitation, refused similar invitations, given previously, but that night, maddened by the thought of the position in which he had placed himself, he went. He dined with the few 'choice friends;' his was a nature which could never stop halfway in a thing. He drank—drank deeply—and was brought home by some—not such novices as himself in the noble art—who

considered it the best joke of the term to get a man 'like Farren dead drunk.'

When reason and reflection came back; when Edgar knew where he had been and what he had done, he felt all was over. The demon of despair—that darkest demon which can possess a man's soul—came into him. It chained him down amongst the tombs of ruined hopes and lost joys, and he could see no Christ to strike off the fetters and bid him be in his right mind.

But Christ was at hand. As Edgar finished telling me, I rose and put out the lamp, and through the half-closed blinds the light of morning fell.

It fell on the quiet face of our sleeper; it fell on the repentant face of my husband; and we knew that Christmas and the Sabbath had dawned. We had kept watch with our Gypsie through the silent hours of the night, and in those night-watches Jesus had come to us over the troubled waters, and we heard the sound of His voice.

Oh, the peace-breathing calm of that Christmas morning! One loved one safe! Not all the anguish of fierce temptation or utmost power of the devil could ever touch my Gypsie. And for Edgar? He was mine;—not beyond the power of Heaven's or Earth's mercy:—he was mine still. Not separate, not apart, not bearing his burden alone, not fighting the devil single-handed! Oh, the mercy of God, who had given me back mine own!

And as I felt my husband fold me to him again; as I felt his passionate kisses of agony and repentance and love; as I heard his bitter 'Maude, you can never forgive me!' then I knew and felt what I had suffered; and I thanked God that it was over.

'I was possessed, Maude; the devil was in me; and with that devil I could not face my wife; I could not see my child. You can never forgive me.'

'Never forgive!' I got up, and very

gently drew up the Venetian blinds, and the broad, red, winter sunlight fell in. It fell on Gypsie—deepened the golden curls, and gleamed upon the pale, sweet face. Why not? why should not God's sunshine fall upon one who was basking in the Eternal sunshine of the golden city? It fell on Edgar's tear-stained face—scarcely less pale than the sculptured one by which he knelt. Why not? why should not God's sunshine fall upon one into whose heart the sunshine of God's mercy was stealing?

I knelt down again by Edgar. I laid my hand on his, and whispered, 'Edgar, can you look there—upon that face which God's finger has touched—and say you can never be forgiven?' And Edgar made no reply.

It was broad morning now; the night had passed; the full day had come; and day was the time for work.

'Edgar,' I said, 'there is only one way open for us.'

'For *us*,' repeated Edgar.

'Yes, for *us*. My husband, we are one—one in everything; one in sorrow; one in sin. I have sinned more than you, Edgar. I brought all this upon you; I——'

'Hush, hush, Maude! I will not hear you.'

'There is only one thing left for us, Edgar; will you do it?'

'I will do anything,—everything, Maude. Surely, if you have not forsaken me, God has not.'

'God has not, Edgar. You were once my teacher; sorrow has made me wise, and I shall become yours now. God never forsakes man; it is man who forsakes God. Edgar, will you do what I want you, and what I think God wants you to do?'

'What is that?'

'It will be hard work, but it must be done. Tell Dr. Long everything, and Dr. Vanny. Will you do this, my husband?'

Edgar did not speak; it was a tremendous struggle.

'I am certain it is the only plan, Edgar. We will start afresh; we will learn from the past; we will do better for the future; we will try to live humbly, rightly, more nobly; we will meet Gypsie again. Edgar, will you?'

'Yes, Maude, I will.'

And while Edgar and I still knelt there, I heard someone very gently open the door and come in. It was Dr. Vanny. I got up, but Edgar still knelt. I pointed Dr. Vanny to my place beside Edgar, and I left them together—together with the one whom God had taken.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

I saw no one but a servant until one o'clock that day. When I went downstairs, I found Aunt Gretta in the dining-room. She greeted me with overwhelming love and tears, and told me that Papa was worse, and then we sat silently down to luncheon. Before it was over Dr. Vanny came in. He looked fagged and worn out, but his face brightened on seeing me, and I knew from his looks that all was right. That luncheon-time, Dr. Vanny was both polite and attentive to Aunt Gretta. To me, he was unspeakably gentle and kind; it made my eyes overflow.

'Poor dear!' said Aunt Gretta, taking out her pocket-handkerchief afresh. 'Poor

dear! This is a sad return for you, to be sure, Maude, the first time home again!'

'Maude was born to be useful,' said Dr. Vanny, with an attempt at a smile, 'and she will be what she was born for.' I wish you to be head nurse, Maude, during your father's illness. I have no fear of contagion, and have tried to convince Edgar of this, and he has consented to your waiting on your father, if you are willing to do so; and I trust,' he added, in a lower tone, 'that you will not only be willing, but anxious. Mrs. Nilson will do all requisite nursing, but I want you too. Edgar will speak to you about it, and he has promised me to put no obstacles in the way of my plan.'

Aunt Gretta suddenly removed her handkerchief, and exclaimed about her thoughtlessness in forgetting Mr. Farren. 'To begin luncheon without him; dear, dear! what will he think, Maude? I am truly sorry. And his first visit, and coming all that long way; and dear little Gypsie used to think so much

of him.' Aunt Gretta's sobs obliged her to stop, and Dr. Vanny took advantage of the pause, to say,—

'Mr. Farren is particularly engaged in my sitting-room. He is writing a letter, and he wishes to be undisturbed. I shall see, however,' he said, smiling at me, 'that he does not starve. And, Maude, I am not altogether unmindful of you, though you think I am a hard-hearted old fellow. When we are more —more at liberty, I propose to send for Rawlins and baby to come and stay at my house.'

I could not speak, but Aunt Gretta's astonishment swallowed up all her other feelings. 'A baby!' she exclaimed; 'a real baby! you are joking, Dr. Vanny! you don't mean to say that Maude has a real baby!'

'A real baby!' said the doctor, taking her tone. 'She has a baby, I know, for I saw it with my own eyes; and I dare wager my head it isn't a sham one, for it squeaked loud enough to deafen a man.'

Between her inclination to laugh, her

belief that she ought to cry, her astonishment and delight, Aunt Gretta's face assumed rather a ludicrous mixture of expressions.

Dr. Vanny was serious again in a moment. 'Think well, Maude, about what I propose. Your father may be ill weeks—months. Trouble has taken hold of him, as well as sickness. His hopes were bound up in Gypsie, and he is not a man to be bereft of them lightly. Still, I do not forget that you have a husband and child. Edgar will not oppose it; he will submit to what you wish. If you do decide to stay, I will send my trusty man for Rawlins and baby, and they will be at my house. Edgar will sleep there until he leave; he has an insuperable objection to staying here under present circumstances—that is, while your father is unable to say whether he would wish it or not, and I think he is right; he will see you every day, and he will be with his child. I had also thought that as your Aunt Gretta is such an excellent nurse, and does now need a

little change, perhaps she would be willing to leave here for a few days after Friday, and stay for a short time at my house to see that Mr. Farren and baby are well attended to. It would be such a comfort to you to know that your husband and child were well cared for; and Mr. Farren does require some nursing,' he concluded, turning to Aunt Gretta. He got up as he spoke, and added, in a low tone, 'I have many reasons, Maude, for wishing you to stay,' and he left the room. He re-opened the door and said, 'Will you go into my sitting-room, Maude, about five o'clock? I am going now to your father.'

At five o'clock I knocked at the door of Dr. Vanny's sitting-room. Edgar said, 'Come in,' and I went in. He was sitting before an open desk, on which lay a folded letter. Both his elbows were on the table; both his hands hid his face. He looked up when I laid my hand on him; and his face! As I looked at him, I wept.

He drew me close to him. 'I am not

worth your tears, my Maude. I am almost a wreck.'

I looked up through my tears. 'Edgar, you once told me, and I now tell it you, that God can give you rest.'

He gazed at me so mournfully, so tenderly, so hopelessly. He pushed back, as he used to do, the thick black hair from my forehead, and turned it away to look better upon the face raised to his. He suddenly started. 'Why, Maude, your hair is quite grey in several places—actually grey;' and he put it still further back. 'Why, when did this come?'

I buried my face on his arm that he might not see it, but he understood it all in a second. He put me from him with a groan, and rose up and began walking up and down the room.

I looked up in a minute or two. 'May I read this letter, Edgar?'

'Yes, read it, and don't curse me, Maude.'

I read it—a full, clear, explicit account, without the faintest attempt to defend any-

thing, or lessen the sin by the least excuse. A statement of simple facts, without an effort to extenuate a single one. No dwelling upon the temptation, no shielding under circumstances, no desire to soften the harshest view of his case. Edgar must have written the burden of his conscience out at full.

I folded it up again. I looked at my husband, still pacing nervously about the room. I glanced at the timepiece—half-past five; six o'clock was the hour the post-bag was called for—half an hour yet. Edgar had just finished writing as I came in; the direction was wet. He had written on and on, under the influence of strong excitement; there had been no time for re-action; it might come suddenly—it might be beginning to come now. If the letter went at once, all would be right. I said, without looking up, 'May I fasten it, Edgar?'

'Yes,—no; stay a moment, Maude. It is not time yet. I should like to look at it again myself; I wrote hurriedly.'

'It is everything it should be, dear Edgar; it could not be improved. It is life, it is salvation to me. Oh, my husband! you have saved us—your wife and child.'

'Maude, Maude, do you mean to mock me? I would rather you cursed me than thanked me.'

There was a knock at the door. It was Dr. Vanny; he did not come in, but stood there. 'Maude, I am going to drive to my house; I will take the letters if they are ready, and stop the man calling. Your father is sleeping; there must not be a sound in the house that can be avoided. Are the letters ready?'

I went back to Edgar. He half muttered, half said, 'To-morrow will do, I think; perhaps—tell Dr. Vanny——'

'Edgar,' I whispered, 'for Gypsie's sake, let us do right: we want to see him again; *I* want to see him again; you and I are one, my husband.'

'Send it,' and he turned from me. A

moment more, and Dr. Vanny had gone, and the letters with him. And then the re-action. bodily and mental, came.

Edgar laid down on the couch. I saw he could not stand any longer. His luncheon was untouched on a small table. I covered him up with sofa-rugs, and he submitted like a child; his hands were cold as ice, his head was burning hot, he neither spoke nor moved while I built up the fire to warm the chilled room, and lowered the lights, until as I was leaving to get something for him to take, he looked up, and said faintly, 'Don't go, Maude.'

'I will be back in one moment, dear Edgar,' and I was. He swallowed what I brought him without speaking, and then he lay still, but for a nervous tremor which every now and then shook him.

And so I sat beside him as I used to sit when—but I scarcely knew when, the days seemed so very long ago.

And the next day passed, and Edgar still seemed utterly prostrate, only insisting on

going down at night to Dr. Vanny's, as he had done the night before. On the afternoon of Tuesday, Dr. Vanny, who superintended all the arrangements, asked Edgar to ride to the neighbouring town to see after certain things. Edgar begged to be excused; but Dr. Vanny was firm, and told him that as Mr. Retnor was still from home, he ought to take his share of work, and relieve him all he could; and Edgar went. It was the very thing he needed. I stood by the library window, and watched him ride down the avenue, and thought of Dr. Vanny, whose early love—crushed, thwarted, disappointed—had blossomed in later life into deeds of thoughtful kindness and purest benevolence; while mine, unchecked and unrestrained, had chosen its own heedless course, and dragged its object into—what? I turned round, and found the Doctor close behind me. I tried to put into words some such thoughts as had been passing through my mind, but he said, 'Don't be a foolish child, Maude. Your

husband wants some work to do, and I have given it him. He is restless and excited, and then prostrate and weak, and will be until he gets out of this house, and until'——he stopped.

'He is almost as much at yours,' I could not help saying, a little regretfully.

'Never mind, Maude. It is natural he should not like to be here until your poor father is able to speak his mind; it is right you should nurse your father; and it is well that you should both choose duty, whether it is pleasant or not. I will look after Edgar.'

'Dr. Vanny, you said until—and then stopped. May I know what you were going to say?'

'Until Edgar has seen Dr. Long,' he said.

'Dr. Vanny, how will he bear it; and what will be the consequence? But that may not be for weeks yet.'

'I hope it will be to-night,' he said, coolly.

'To-night?'

'Yes; I wrote to Dr. Long myself. He would receive it at the same time as Edgar's letter. I begged that, if it were possible, he would come up at once. And I think he will.'

I sat down. Dr. Vanny went on, 'If he come, it will probably be by the 5.30 train, which I shall go to meet. Edgar will be at home about five, and after his cold ride will be able, I hope, to eat some dinner, which he has not done, to judge by his looks, for a long time. I shall take Dr. Long to my house. I shall not sleep here after Friday. I trust, Maude, that your father may pull through; if not, he is in God's hands,' and Dr. Vanny left me.

He came in for a moment before he went away. I was sitting exactly where he had left me.

'Maude, you are a sad, idle girl! Well, well; keep up your heart! remember you do not breathe a hint to Edgar about Dr. Long. I cannot report any difference in your

father. Aunt Gretta and Mrs. Nilson are in his room,' and he went.

About a quarter of an hour longer, and I saw in the dim light a horse slowly coming up the avenue. The drive was strewed with bark and no sound could be heard, but I saw Edgar. I summoned a servant to take his horse, and went to meet him. He came in, but he did not look so haggard and worn as he had done ; the ride had done him some good, and he dined with Aunt Gretta and me in the dining-room, to Aunt Gretta's great delight. It was the first meal he had taken with her since he came.

After dinner, Edgar and I returned to the blue-room. I believe it was the only room in which Edgar felt at home. When he knew the house, this room had been used as a general repository and playroom for Gypsie. After he had had a regular tutor, the room had been re-furnished and called the blue-room. All in it was new, and conveyed no painful associations either to Edgar or myself.

We sat in the fire-light, and talked of many things; there was no gulf between us now.

I do not know how long we had been sitting there. Scarcely a sound ever broke the stillness of the house where Death held his reign, and, for aught we knew, might soon hold it again. The handle of the door was touched, and someone came in. We both thought it was Dr. Vanny, and Edgar remarked, without turning round, 'You are earlier than usual to-night, Dr. Vanny;' but I saw what he did not see—that it was Dr. Long! As no one answered, Edgar looked round, and sprang to his feet. Only for a second he faltered, and then, drawing himself up to his full height, he lifted up his head and looked Dr. Long in the face. I slipped away and left them together. I stopped at the door of my old room, unfastened it, and went in.

I did not see my husband again that night. Dr. Vanny came, and brought me out of that room, putting the key in his pocket as he

did so. He told me that Edgar was in a state of great excitement, and that he wished me to leave him in his care. He further added that Papa had mentioned my name once or twice in an incoherent manner in connection with Gypsie's, and he would like me to sit in his room an hour or two. He should then be able to judge if it excited him, and he wished to see if he would notice it. He took me to the dining-room, where he made me take something, and then we went to Papa's room.

Mrs. Nilson was there, and a servant in the dressing-room. Papa lay quiet. The only evidence of consciousness or memory seemed to be the name, now and then repeated, of 'Gypsie,' and once I heard my own name. He never noticed me; never seemed to recognise me. Would he go away without any token of forgiveness? At the end of the hour Dr. Vanny came for me.

How heavily passed the next day! I found the door locked and the key taken

away from the door of my old room. I did not see my husband all the day. I was not allowed to go into Papa's room; he had roused from his stupor, and was very restless. Before Dr. Vanny left he came into the library and told me that Edgar would be up for an hour in the evening. When he had gone, I put down the lights, drew up the blinds, and sat waiting for Edgar. What had Dr. Long said to him? what would be the effect upon him? what course was before him? what would be our future? would Dr. Long ever be our friend again? These and a hundred other questions I resolved in my mind as I sat there watching the snow-flakes fall, soft and white, until the lawn and the trees shone in the moonlight like a fairy scene.

At last, on the white carpet I thought I saw a tall figure coming up the avenue. One instant to be certain, and the next I was walking rapidly to meet Edgar. There was no one to see; my arms were round his neck;

my lips against his almost before he knew I was near him. 'Edgar, Edgar, do speak to me!' and in a very low tone he said, 'It is all right, Maude.'

For two hours Edgar and I were alone in the blue-room. Dr. Long had left early that morning; he was going to spend two days with an old friend of his who lived in the neighbourhood; and he was to return on Thursday night to be with us on Friday, for he was going to perform the service on that day. If one thing more than another could have given Edgar and me to feel that Dr. Long buried all sense of wrong at the past, it was this. It was so sweet to feel that no stranger, but he —our friend whom we had wronged, but who forgave—should read those words over Gypsie.

Mr. Retnor, of course, had he been at home, must have been the one who would have done it; but his brother still lingered, and it was necessary that Mr. Retnor should be there, either in case of his death or his

recovery of consciousness. But by letter, he concurred in leaving all arrangements in Dr. Vanny's hands ; and Dr. Long, having known Papa years ago, was justified in being Dr. Vanny's selection. But the truth was, it was not a selection at all. I question whether even Dr. Vanny, under the circumstances, would have suggested such a thing. It was Dr. Long's voluntary offer—an offer which showed that he meant what he said when he said to Edgar at leaving, 'Mr. Farren, man's forgiveness is often only a very partial and poor thing ; let you and I strive after a forgiveness more Christ-like ; let us on Friday bury every thought which would embitter a future, which, I trust, by God's grace, will be better and safer for the suffering of the past.'

'You and I.' I think there was nothing he said which went to Edgar's heart more than this. As if he had sinned! Putting himself with him, and making them one.

The words came with wonderfully healing power.

Maggie and her husband were expected on Thursday night. They had put off coming until the last. But then, how could Maggie exist in that atmosphere? She knew, and of course Mr. Retnor knew, that Edgar and I were at Stonecross, but Mr. Retnor never made the least allusion to either of us in his letters.

Before he left on Thursday evening, Edgar and I went to have one more look at Gypsie, and there, by his side we knelt, while Edgar asked God to forgive us for the past, to help us for the present, and to strengthen us for the future, so that we too might have, in spite of sins and failures, a 'sure and certain hope of a joyful resurrection.'

And then,—with love's last passionate, tearless kisses left upon my darling, Edgar took me away.

Just after Edgar left me, and as I was watching him walk quickly down the avenue,

a carriage drove up with Maggie and her husband. Dr. Vanny had not yet returned for the night. Aunt Gretta went to meet them, and, by and by, I heard Maggie's voice and the sound of loud sobbing in the hall. So strangely it broke the brooding stillness of the house!

After several minutes of calling and ordering and attending to luggage, I heard Maggie proceed to the dining-room, followed by the delicate tread of Captain Snuffins. That man always walks as if he were dancing the polka! I heard Maggie say something in a loud voice about 'expensive mourning' and 'Maude's black.' I hastily shut the door, but I had not been in three minutes, before I heard a tap upon it, and I had scarcely made a retreat behind the heavy blue window-curtain, when the door opened, and Aunt Gretta came in. I had had no light in the room, except the fire-light, therefore Aunt Gretta came in into what must have seemed to her almost total darkness.

'Dear, dear,' she said, 'all dark, and Maude not here! Where can that child be? She surely is never—no, Dr. Vanny would see after that. I thought she and Mr. Farren were here, and Maggie wants to see him so much; she says she has never forgotten what beautiful eyes he had. I wonder where they can be,' and meandering little wonders to herself, Aunt Gretta trotted off, and closed the door behind her.

'Beautiful eyes,' 'expensive mourning,' 'Maude's black,'—and she had not been in the house ten minutes!

I sat down, determined I would stay there until Dr. Vanny came, and then go into the dining-room with him. I had not long to wait. I saw Dr. Vanny's carriage drive up the avenue, and I went to the front door to meet him. He looked surprised.

'It isn't Edgar,' he said; 'did you make a mistake?'

'Dr. Vanny!'

He put his hand on my shoulder. 'Well,

well, I know you like the old doctor a little bit, though he is such a gruff old chap; any news from the sick-room; what report does Mrs. Nilson give?'

'She says there is no change, only she thinks Papa a little quieter.'

'Humph!' He stood under the hall-lamp, and drew out his watch; suddenly looking up, his eye fell on some trunks, which had not yet been carried away.

'They have come, then,' he asked; 'how long?'

'Perhaps twenty minutes.'

'Seen them?' he briefly interrogated.

'No,' I said, hesitatingly.

He half-smiled. 'All right,' he said; 'now I know why you came to meet the old Doctor; wait a moment, Maude, while I go into the sick-room, and I'll come down to you.' He went upstairs, and I slipped into the library. Even there I could hear Maggie's voice in the dining-room.

When Dr. Vanny came downstairs, I

went into the hall to meet him; he turned round to look at the trunks,—four, not small ones.

'Maggie leaves to-morrow,' he said.

'To-morrow!' I exclaimed.

'Yes; Captain Snuffins said in his letter that unfortunately their nerves would not be able to sustain a lengthened stay under such distressing circumstances; it would affect them both most painfully.' Dr. Vanny drew my hand through his arm, and whispered, 'Mind, Maude, I forbid you to sit up late.'

'Oh, Maude, Maude!' There was a sound as when you suddenly squeeze a large sponge filled with water, or rapidly draw a syringe, and I felt as if two pillows were being hung round my neck. I quite gasped for breath.

'Oh, Maude, Maude! to think! I havn't eaten anything for—for—ever since I heard of it'—sob—'Augustus said he really must'—sob—'call in a doctor'—sob—'I was losing all my colour and growing'—sob

—'so thin'—sob—'and crying, you know'—sob—'does spoil one's eyes so!'

'Will you please, Maggie, take your arms off my neck?' I managed to say, and she obligingly complied with my request.

'La, Maude! how you do look!—and you don't cry at all—and you havn't got your crape yet—and you don't seem to feel half so much as I thought you would—and you know you always spoilt Gypsie so—and—but he was so good with it all, I never knew a child take such care of his clothes, and——' At each 'and' Maggie sobbed.

'You have not spoken to me, Maggie,' said Dr. Vanny, and I thought his voice sounded very stern; 'nor have you allowed Maude to speak to Captain Snuffins.'

'La!' said Maggie, drying her eyes, 'I am sure I never saw you, I was so overwhelmed; it is so distressing to feel things as I do! I only wish I could take them more as Maude does. I really will try and control my feelings more, but I am so sensitive.

How are you Dr. Vanny, and how is Papa?'

'Your father is very ill,' said Dr. Vanny, shortly, 'and likely to be so for a long time, and it is imperative that we have no noise in the house.'

'La!' said Maggie, 'how distressing! though of course now there are no children to make a noise, though poor, dear Gypsie was such a good child.'

'Let me have something to eat, please,' said Dr. Vanny, seating himself at the table, and addressing Aunt Gretta. 'Captain Snuffins, I beg your pardon! I believe I have not shaken hands with you. I hope you are well.'

'Why yeth,' said the Captain, taking out a very large cambric handkerchief, bordered with black, which scented the room with otto of roses, 'ath well ath can be expected, you know, Dr. Vanny, under thuch, I mutht thay pecooliarly dithtrething thircumstances. I athure you, Dr. Vanny, we do feel them

ver—ry deeply. At what hour to-morrow doth thith motht painful theremony take plathe?'

'At twelve o'clock,' said Dr. Vanny, shortly. 'Maude, sit down and eat something; it is time you were in bed.'

'But where is your husband?' cried Maggie; 'where is Mr. Farren of "*les beaux yeux*"? Oh, you horrid thing! How could you go and marry a *bourgeois*? but then, he really is so very handsome! whatever dress where you married in, Maude? The idea of being married any way! I wonder at you! and no *trousseau* at all! Now, when I was married, although I did do it without Papa knowing, I took care all the people about should know, and there were plenty of people to see me. Harrogate was very full just then; I chose that time on purpose, and I wore——'

'My love,' interrupted Captain Snuffins, 'do eat thomething; you will be tho faint!'

'I will try the breast of that turkey,

Aunt Gretta,' said Maggie, 'but I am afraid I can't touch it; and, Augustus, just mix me the toddy, will you? because you know exactly how I like it, you've done it so often.'

'With the greateth pleathure,' said Augustus, and he proceeded forthwith to work.

'And so, Maude,' proceeded Maggie, 'Aunt Gretta says you have a baby! I hope you got a pretty colour for its cloak. Charlotte had such a frightfully dingy thing; I don't know what she will have for this one, but that made me ill to look at it; I wonder it didn't make the child ill to wear it. Just like Charlotte! because it wouldn't soil soon! The idea! and she with her fortune and Mr. Retnor's eldest brother now dying, and he will come in for all the property. And then, if anything should happen to Papa, we shall all have—but of course, I hope nothing will happen, and——'

'My dear Maude,' said Aunt Gretta, suddenly turning to me, 'wherever is Mr. Farren? he surely has not gone!'

'He asked me to apologise, Aunt Gretta, for going without bidding you good-night; he said I was to do it for him.'

'Good-night!' echoed Maggie, 'why, where's he gone to; isn't he here? Dr. Vanny said in his letter to Augustus that you were both here.'

'He is staying at my house,' said Dr. Vanny, 'and will do so for the present, as Maude is going to wait on your father, should he pull through, which I think it right to tell you, Maggie, is very doubtful.'

Maggie began to sob again, and Captain Snuffins tenderly entreated her to partake of the hot brandy and water which was now ready, and Aunt Gretta turned to me and said, 'I came to the blue-room to look for you, my dear, as soon as Maggie came, but I could not find you. I hope, Maude, you have not been long in *that* room; my dear child, you should not; I was so glad to see that Dr. Vanny had taken the key yesterday,' and Aunt Gretta began to cry too.

I did not speak, and Maggie ceased sobbing to ask, 'What room?'

'The room where dear little Gypsie is,' sobbed Aunt Gretta.

'Oh, Maude! oh, my goodness! oh, to think of it! You don't mean to say you go *there*! Oh, Augustus, it has made me feel *so* ill! Aunt Gretta, how could you let her? Well, Maude, you always were queer, but this beats everything—to go in *there*! I wouldn't have done it, no, not for two thousand pounds, if I had had the money laid down before me; no, that I would not. Oh, Augustus! did you ever hear of such a thing in all your life?'

'My dear love,' lisped Augustus, 'now, do be calm, pray do. You know you mutht'nt agitate yourthelf. Pray, be calm.'

Dr. Vanny rose from the table. 'Maude, have you finished? Perhaps Maggie will excuse you to-night as you are not well, and it is getting late. I am sure Aunt Gretta will; she knows how weary you are.'

'Certainly,' said Aunt Gretta, 'poor dear. I am sure it's a sad thing for both of you, such a visit.'

'But you mustn't go, Maude,' cried Maggie. 'I have a hundred things to say. When shall I see Mr. Farren? I am sure he will think I am wonderfully altered since he saw me; everyone says that I am looking better than I did, even before I was married.'

'Please, Maggie, excuse me.' I kissed her and Aunt Gretta; shook hands with Captain Snuffins, and made my escape with Dr. Vanny before Maggie could recover her astonishment; she was just beginning to speak as I closed the door.

Dr. Vanny walked quickly upstairs, and muttered half the way, but I could not catch what he said.

When he left me at the door of my room, he kissed me affectionately, and said, 'God bless you, my child.'

The next day came—and went. Papa lay unconscious—unconscious that we were

bearing out of his sight that for which he would have given his own life. A greater than he had come in, and no man was able to dispute that claim. The Earth had put on her snow-white garments to receive to her arms one as spotless, as unstained as the covering she wore. The young and old of three villages followed our Gypsie to the grave; and Edgar and I stood side by side, as under the chancel-window in the large vault where reposed the dust of many a Maynard, Dr. Long committed our Gypsie, 'ashes to ashes, dust to dust, in sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life.'

And we left him there.

No; not there; he was feeling what 'God's arms were like.'

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

Maggie and Captain Snuffins left that afternoon, after Maggie had been to see Charlotte. She told me at parting that I was 'queerer than ever, and she did not know what to make of me; that my new black was a horrid fit; and that as for Edgar, his eyes looked as heavy as possible; and with all his colour gone, and actually some grey hairs, he looked almost ugly, but still she would come to see us some time during the year at Mannerton; Mr. Farren might look better then.' And so they went. Dr. Vanny drove with them to the station and saw them off. I believe Dr. Vanny never thinks of himself in little or great things.

Just as we were finishing tea in the dining-

room a servant came and asked for me. I went into the drawing-room ; someone stood there ; I was folded in loving arms, and I knew it was Aunt Louise.

'I should have been here long since, Maude, had it been possible ; but it was not. It has been a great grief to me that I could not. Poor Maude !' and we wept together.

And then I took her in, and she greeted Aunt Gretta with all her usual grace and courtesy, and my husband even with more.

'Mr. Farren, I have long wished to make your personal acquaintance ; otherwise, you are no stranger to me. I trust Maude's husband will always be my friend.'

I saw a shadow flit over Edgar's face, and I was glad when Aunt Gretta began to talk.

Dr. Vanny's surprise was not less than his delight when he came into the blue-room that night and found Aunt Louise with me ; Edgar had just left.

'I knew you would come,' he said; 'you have not been able to come before, and——'

'No;' and I left them together.

Aunt Louise shared my room that night, and we sat long into the morning talking over all that had happened. No—not all; almost the last thing she said to me was, 'Maude, my child, I see I was right; you have suffered!'

Yes, I have suffered, Aunt Louise, but you know not how!

She stayed with us three days. What a comfort her very presence was! But the trouble was to make Edgar get rid of the notion that he had no right to be treated as a friend and relation by Aunt Louise, until she knew of his sin and his fall. How difficult it was to battle with this idea, and to show him that it was simply morbid! I could not bring him to see it in this light until Dr. Vanny told him that for his wife and child's sake he had no right to publish his fall where

truth and honour did not require it to be done.

The three days she spent with us were peaceful ones, though very sad. On the Saturday, the day after she came, as I was sitting with her, Dr. Vanny, who had been out all the afternoon, came in unexpectedly. It was just growing dark. He said, 'Maude, I want you, but nothing is the matter; you need not start so. I declare you are as nervous as possible; come with me,' and he took me into the dining-room. Coming out of the darkness and suddenly going into the light, I could see nothing plainly at first, and then I saw someone sitting before the fire. It was Edgar, and in his arms—baby. Dr. Vanny went out and left Edgar and me together with our child.

On Sunday morning we went to church. Aunt Louise and Dr. Vanny, with Edgar and I, sat in the old family pew, while Dr. Long occupied the pulpit and preached from 'He fell asleep.'

After the afternoon service, when all the people had left, Dr. Long took our little one in his arms, and, signing him with the sign of the cross, consecrated him to be 'Christ's faithful soldier and servant unto his life's end.'

On Monday afternoon Aunt Louise—dear Aunt Louise accomplished what I ardently longed for, but dared not hope could be. She said, 'Maude, if you will put your things on and go down with me, I think Charlotte will see you,' and I did. Edgar had made no objection, and he walked down with us to the village. We called on our way at Dr. Vanny's to see baby, and he left us at the door of Charlotte's house. Aunt Louise took me into the breakfast-room while she went upstairs, and then she came down and said, 'Come up with me, Maude, dear, if you like, but I am afraid you will be disappointed at——' she hesitated.

'No, Aunt Louise; I shall not be disappointed. I am only thankful that Charlotte

will see me at all,' and I followed her upstairs.

It was a large and very handsome room into which we went. Charlotte was lying on the bed ; she made no objection to my kissing her, and she said, 'How are you, Maude?' When I asked her how her little girl was, and if I might look at the baby, who was asleep in his cot, she said, 'If you like,' and began to talk to Aunt Louise. I went to look at the baby, and took my seat there, as I thought she did not wish me to hear what she was saying to Aunt Louise. When Aunt Louise said we must go, I stooped down and kissed the little sleeper, and when I went up to Charlotte, I thought her face had rather softened to me. She said, 'Aunt Louise says you have a baby of your own.'

'Yes ; he was baptised here yesterday by Dr. Long ; he and Rawlins are staying, with my husband, at Dr. Vanny's.'

Charlotte frowned. 'Indeed! what have you called the baby?'

'Gypsie.'

'Oh!'

'Good-bye, Charlotte. Dr. Vanny wishes me to stay at Stonecross while Papa is ill. May I come again and see you?'

'Well, I shall be getting up by-and-by, I hope; and, of course, I shall be up at the house as soon as I am able.'

I bent over her and kissed her. She did not return the kiss, but she did not seem to object. I went and stood for one moment in the bay-window, and looked out at the village and the school-house. That was the window where I had stood one day, more than two years ago, when I had come with Aunt Gretta to look over Charlotte's house. I silently followed Aunt Louise from the room.

Aunt Louise seemed relieved when we got out.

'I am afraid, dear, you are disappointed; you must not think anything of Charlotte's manner; you know she always was rather cold.'

'I am not at all disappointed, Aunt

Louise. I never thought Charlotte would let me see her again. It was far more than I deserved.'

Aunt Louise looked surprised. 'You are very much changed, Maude! very different from the headstrong girl you once were! you are growing as gentle as your poor mother was.'

I walked on silently for a few minutes, and then asked, 'Do you think, Aunt Louise, that Charlotte will object to my being at Stonecross, and waiting upon Papa, if he will allow me, until she is out again?'

'You need not have much fear on that ground, Maude. I am afraid it will be some time before Charlotte is out again, and longer still before she is at liberty to help Aunt Gretta in nursing your father. Dr. Vanny fears her baby will not live.'

'Not live!' I exclaimed.

'It is very frail,' said Aunt Louise, 'very different from the little girl, and Dr. Vanny fears it will not be reared. With Mr. Retnor

I do not see that you need come into contact. If Dr. Vanny authorises you being here, and Aunt Gretta wishes it, that is quite enough, until your father himself objects. I am pleased with this arrangement for several reasons. I trust it will prove the means of an entire reconciliation between your father and you; and you will be able to show that you are anxious to prove your sincerity, and that you and Edgar are willing to give up your own convenience and wishes for that purpose. Mr. Farren looks as if he needed rest and change, and he will get both if he spend the remainder of his holidays at Dr. Vanny's, and you will see him and your child constantly. I confess I am astonished that Mr. Farren has been brought to give his consent to the plan; it only shows how unselfish he is; there are not many husbands, especially such a husband as he is, who would consent to it.'

Ah, Aunt Louise, you did not know!

What were we that we should seek our own way any more ?

I was silent, and then said, 'Aunt Louise, what trouble there seems to have been lately !'

'But Gypsie is for ever beyond the reach of trouble, Maude !'

We turned into the churchyard ; the church door was open ; we noiselessly entered, and passed up the aisle to the chancel. Someone was kneeling there, his face hid in his hands. It was Edgar ; and Aunt Louise withdrew as noiselessly as she had come in, and I went and knelt by my husband.

Dr. Long and Aunt Louise left the next day. Edgar and I drove with them to the station. Aunt Louise started the first, and as she was speaking to Edgar, Dr. Long walked for a moment or two up and down the station with me.

'Mrs. Farren,' he said, 'I hear you are thinking of staying at Stonecross until your father is better, and I think you do right.

When your husband has to return to his duties alone, he must be my guest until you join him, and you may implicitly rely on me that I will care as much for him as I would for my own son.'

I could not speak, and Dr. Long went on. 'I have had no conversation with him since the night I came; I judged it better not. Time will now be the best thing for him, and he will soon be able to look more calmly on the past. I have not the least doubt that the lessons he has learned will make him, for the whole of his life, a better and more useful man. I shall write to him when I get home.'

It was in vain I tried to speak, nothing but hot tears would come: but one thing I longed to say.

'What is it?' asked Dr. Long, kindly.

'Dr. Long, you have been——'

'No, no; I do not want to hear that.'

'Dr. Long——'

'Well?'

'It was my fault—all mine! I was entirely to blame! I-——'

'There,' he said, 'let us go to your Aunt Louise; the train will be off directly.'

Dr. Long's train immediately followed; there was no time to say anything more.

'I shall write to you, Farren, in a day or two,' he said; 'in the meantime,' he added, smiling, 'take care of your wife and baby, and yourself for their sakes.'

Two days after, Edgar received a letter from Dr. Long. I have put it with the others among the leaves of my book. Edgar and I often look at it. It helps us, it comforts us, it does us good:—

Mannerton, Jan. —— ——

'My dear Farren,

'When I left you, I said I should write to you shortly, and I hasten to fulfil my promise.

'At Stonecross I thought it well not to have any more conversation with you on the subject which brought me there. All that

was necessary for you and for me passed between us on that first evening, and anything more I may wish to say, I shall do in this letter. The great excitement and trouble which has held you fast for some time, will now be beginning to pass away, and you will be able to look at things more calmly, and view them in a truer light.

'I would not wish for one moment to persuade you to think less of your sin, or to judge more lightly of the guilt of that sin. At the same time, I would warn you against the violent re-action which is leading you into an error of the opposite extreme—that morbid delight in dwelling on the darkest view of the case, that utter absence of hope which leads to despair, and which is the open gate to Hell, and that want of confidence in yourself for the future, which is but a subtilised form of disbelief in God. No man has a right to despair; to do so, is to bring dishonour upon that Name, which in its fullest sense

means, "He shall save His people from their sins."

'I take my stand now on a lower ground, and I would tell you also, that no man with repentance behind him, and conduct before him, and a wife and child dependent upon him, has a right to despair. *That* is to add to his sin, and proves him unworthy of the manhood which he has stained, but not hopelessly lost.

'And now, as to the future. I am quite willing to agree to your wish that the money you took you should repay in the full by money earned by your own labour, and I trust Mrs. Farren will concur in this arrangement, however much her heart may rebel against it. It being your own earnest desire, I believe it will afford you much more satisfaction to carry it out, and thus honestly to repay by your own toil what you dishonestly took. But there can be no objection to my helping you towards that object, or aiding you in the way of attaining it.

'It is my particular wish that you over-

come your reluctance to returning to Mannerton, and that you resume your usual duties in our School. Your salary would have been raised some months since, had it not been, as you know, for some unusual expenses in connection with the School. I propose to put you, on your return, in a higher position, with a proportional increase of salary. You are well qualified to take this position. *Morally*, I consider you far more qualified than you were six months ago; intellectually, I have long considered you equal to it. This, and private teaching, which I can put you in the way of obtaining, will, by dint of careful living and personal economy, enable you before very long, to repay me in full, and you will thus feel that, as far as was in the power of man, you have done everything that it was possible to do, to retrieve your lost position. You will also, by returning to Mannerton, silence any whisper that may possibly have got afloat respecting that evening, the remembrance of which will,

I am persuaded, ever cause you deepest sorrow ; and you will be gradually fitting yourself for a position, in which I trust ere many years have passed to see you—the position which I now occupy—as Head Master of this large institution. I believe you will then be fitted, far more than is usually the case, for holding such a responsible trust. The man who has sinned and repented, and in the light of that repentance, walks humbly and hopefully with his God, is better qualified to guide others, than he who has never sinned and never repented.

'I shall immediately on your return place in your hands a cheque for two hundred pounds, to be remitted to Australia, according to our previous arrangements.

'I earnestly trust that both you and Mrs. Farren will accede to my wishes. I have already explained to your wife, that should she be detained in Stonecross after your return here, Mrs. Long and I shall hold you as our guest until after her return.

'That I have known and esteemed Dr. and Mrs. Maynard in earlier days, might be a sufficient excuse for feeling an interest in their child and her husband, but as you and Mrs. Farren seem to feel oppressed by an exaggerated sense of obligation which I feel anxious should be removed, I would ask you to consider an injunction in an old-fashioned book, which says, if a "man be overtaken in a fault, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted."

'My day of strong temptation may yet be to come. What am I, that I should judge my brother?

'And now, my dear Farren, I must conclude. I am glad that a quiet month at Stonecross lies before you. There, you will recover the even tone of your mind, and you will, I feel assured, come back to us a wiser and a better man, in every way, than when you left.

'I have only to add that, through all our

lives, Mrs. Long and myself will feel that we ever remain yours and Mrs. Farren's most attached and faithful friends.

'WILLIAM S. H. LONG.'

CHAPTER XXXIX.

The crisis of Papa's illness came—passed—and he lived. But many weeks elapsed ere he left his room, and then he was a changed man. During the whole of that time I was his constant attendant and nurse. Edgar was very good; he never murmured, he never complained of my long absence, never showed in his letters how he longed for it to end. He had returned to Mannerton at the end of a month, leaving baby and Rawlins at Dr. Vanny's, and me at Stonecross.

After the first day that Papa recognised me, Dr. Vanny thought I might remain. Papa never spoke to me or noticed me, but he allowed me to sit by him, wait upon him, give him things, and made no sign of objec-

tion. How thankful I was! Not all the sorrow of being parted from my husband could make me regret Dr. Vanny's arrangement, or make me wish to leave Papa. And very peaceful, quiet hours Mrs. Nilson and I passed, sometimes talking of past days, and our dear one whom we had lost.

It was long before Charlotte was able to come up to the Hall, and then it was for very short visits. Her baby gradually drooped. Poor Charlotte! she never made any objections to my being with Papa—at least, I never heard of any; and one day, I accidentally learned that she had called at Dr. Vanny's, and nursed my little Gypsie!

I scarcely saw Mr. Retnor; owing to Papa's illness, he was very busy, and as his daily visits to Papa were always paid at precisely the same hour, I always left the room before he came, that he might not be annoyed by meeting me there.

One day—it was six weeks after the beginning of Papa's illness—he was lying

on a sofa, to which he had been removed. I was sitting a little distance from him, very quietly arranging some crocuses and snowdrops in a vase—that very vase which used to stand on the malachite table in my bedroom, and for which my Gypsie used to bring fresh flowers every night and morning. I was thinking of this, when I heard my name—'Maude!' It was Papa! I got up and went to the sofa; he looked at me very earnestly, put out his hand, and said, 'Poor Maude!' and I saw a tear slowly steal down his wasted cheek, and I wept too.

He said no more, but I sat there, and held his thin hand between both mine, until Mrs. Nilson came in from the dressing-room, when I stole away to my own room, and thanked God!

After that day, he often called me by my name, and one day after Mr. Retnor had been, he said, 'Why do you go away, Maude, when Mr. Retnor comes?' I made no reply, and he lay, apparently thinking.

He gathered strength very slowly; Dr. Vanny said he would never again be as he had been; still, as Spring came on he improved, and as soon as he could he was to be removed to some watering-place in the South.

By-and-by, he was able to sit up a little and be read to sometimes. One day—I think it was in the middle of March—I had been reading to him, as I always did, the Lessons for the day; and one was the eighteenth of Matthew. When I had finished the last verse, 'So likewise shall my Heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses,' he lay for an hour on his couch perfectly still, and then he suddenly turned to me and said, 'Where is your husband, Maude?'

I was so taken by surprise, that I could not answer, and he repeated his question, 'Where is your husband, Maude?'

'At Mannerton,' I said, 'in the Grammar-School there.'

'Write to him and tell him I wish to see him.'

My daily letter to Edgar must have occasioned him no little surprise the next morning. He left by the evening train, and arrived at Dr. Vanny's early the next morning. After breakfast, he came up to the Hall.

Papa used to get into the blue-room about twelve o'clock; when he was settled there on his couch, I went to my usual seat and took up the book for the morning Lessons, but he stopped me,—'Did you write to your husband as I told you, Maude?'

'Yes, Papa.'

'I thought so; you look so happy; is he here?'

'Yes, Papa.'

'Bring him in;' and I brought Edgar in.

Papa rose from his couch, put out both his hands, and said, 'Mr. Farren, I have

been hard upon you and upon this child! I forgive you both from my heart. Will you forgive me?' And Edgar bowed his head on the outstretched hand, and 'they two were at peace.'

As Spring advanced, arrangements were made for our leaving Stonecross and going to Hastings;—Papa, Aunt Gretta, myself, and Mrs. Nilson. Papa had expressed a wish that I should go, but baby—my baby! Papa had never seen it; indeed, I did not know if he knew of its existence. There was nothing to be done, but leaving it still at Dr. Vanny's under the care of Rawlins. Edgar pleaded hard for their return to Mannerton, and for him to go to our own home there, which had been shut up all this time, but Dr. Long earnestly urged his remaining where he was, and he submitted.

Two days before we were to start, I had been down as usual, to see baby, and was

foolish enough to cry a little—only a little—at the prospect of leaving him. When I returned, I was sitting by Papa, reading to him, and after I had finished, he said, 'What have you been crying about, Maude?' I could not tell him; I could only try not to let him see that my eyes were full again.

'Tell me what it is,' he said.

But I could not; so long as he would let me stay with him, even if it kept me from Edgar and my child all the year, I would do it!

That evening, after Dr. Vanny had left, Papa called me to his side, and said, 'Maude, why did you never tell me you had a child; and why has it been kept away from you so long?'

I felt my face become crimson, as if I had been accused of a crime. Papa went on, 'You should not have done so, Maude, poor Maude! You have been a good child to me. Dr. Vanny will send them up to-night, and you must take it with us to Hastings, if still

you will go, but there is time yet to alter, and go to your husband.'

'I will go with you, Papa, if you will let me.'

That night, when I was bidding him 'Good-night,' he asked, 'Is your child in the house, Maude?'

I said, 'Yes,' and he said, 'Bring it to me to-morrow.'

I thought Papa might have forgotten what he had said, and I said nothing to remind him the next day; but after our reading was over, he said, 'Bring your child, Maude,' and I did so.

I thought as I carried baby into the room that he was a picture any mother might have been proud of! What would Papa say? I was afraid he might ask me his name, and if he did, I must tell him. The name of our loved one had never passed his lips, and I feared the effect when he heard baby's name.

He took him in his arms, and looked at

him long and earnestly. 'What is his name?' he asked—and I told him.

It was a shock. I saw that directly. He held baby to me, and I took him out of the room. When I came back, Papa lay with his hand over his eyes, and he did not speak again until Charlotte and Mr. Retnor came, and then I left the room.

The next day we started. As we drove out of the village, Papa turned to me, and said, 'I shall never preach there again, Maude.'

He bore the journey better than we had expected, and he improved with the change. He never mentioned baby, and I thought he had forgotten all about him, when one day after we had been there a week, he suddenly said, 'Where is your child, Maude?' And I brought him.

After that Papa saw him daily, and if he were not brought he always asked for him. He used, as the weather grew warmer, to drive on the beach and sometimes walk down there,

and he would constantly say, 'Let the child go with us.' He never called him 'Gypsie.'

We had been there, perhaps a fortnight, when one day as we were walking slowly on the beach and Aunt Gretta was engrossed with Rawlins and baby, he said to me, 'Maude, will it not be Easter next week?'

'Yes, Papa.'

'Will not your husband have some holiday? Write and ask him to come down here.' I did so, and Edgar came.

Before he left, Papa and he had talked again and again and for long together of our Gypsie. And after Edgar had gone, Papa no longer shrank from the subject, but whenever I brought it forward—and I often did, by Dr. Vanny's request—he would dwell with me on memories of Gypsie, until at last it grew to be a matter on which we could talk with perfect freedom.

He never alluded to the past in other ways, excepting on the night Edgar left. When I had returned from seeing him off, and stooped

down to give Papa my good-night kiss, he held me close to him, and I whispered through my tears, 'Papa, have you quite forgiven us?' and he said, 'As I hope for God's forgiveness.'

After Edgar had left, we dared to call baby by his name, and little Gypsie always accompanied us in every walk and drive we took. It does seem foolish for me to write it, but it is true, that every day he became more winning in his baby-ways; more—I thought, but never said it—more like our Gypsie. He grew to be a great pet with Papa, and every energy of Aunt Gretta's nature seemed expended on him. He was her never-failing delight and employment.

And so the Spring wore on, and still I remained at Hastings, and I only knew by the deep undertone of Edgar's letters how much he longed for me to be at home again. But no one spoke of the future or where Papa should go. He avoided the subject entirely, only saying, whenever we ventured to allude

to it, that he should never live at Stonecross again.

I think it was in the beginning of May, that news came of the death of Charlotte's baby; and a few days afterwards she wrote to say that she would, with her little girl, join Papa at Hastings, as she needed a change very much. I did not mean my face to show what I felt, but I am afraid it did, as Papa said, 'Maude, I see how it is;—your heart is yearning after your husband and your home.' I could not deny it, though I could say, and did say, truthfully that I thanked God with my whole heart, and after Him, Papa, who had allowed me, for the first time in my life, to act a daughter's part to him. Papa folded me in his arms, blessed me, and left the room! What a moment that was! Not all the memories of the past; not all the thought of the long, long time I had been away from Edgar, could chill that joy!

I did not see Papa again that day until evening, nor did Aunt Gretta. He requested that he might be undisturbed. Aunt Gretta

grew nervous, and I felt so anxious, that in the evening I ventured to knock at his door, and ask how he was. My knock and question were twice repeated before he said, 'Come in, Maude,' and I went in. He was sitting in his easy-chair; his writing-desk was before him, and there were two sealed letters upon it. He was very pale, and looked, I thought, as if he had been weeping. He put out his hand, and said, in reply to my anxious questions, that he was not ill, but he had been writing important letters and wished to be quiet. He took them up and said, 'I should like you to post them yourself, Maude. One is to Dr. Vanny; the other to Mr. Retnor. I have offered the living of Stonecross to Mr. Retnor, on the condition of his having one curate of my nomination; the others I shall leave to him. I shall never preach there again. This other letter is to ask Dr. Vanny to come down here as soon as he can.'

When I returned from the post, I found

baby just going to bed, and Aunt Gretta assuming her white, frilled muslin apron, which she alway put on to superintend his ablutions, much to the concealed amusement of Rawlins, who told me one day, that she 'never knew before that it needed two grown women to wash one baby!' But this was only a private relief to Rawlins' feelings; she was invariably the model of respectful deference to Aunt Gretta. I used sometimes to smile in those days when I found out how little I had to do with my own child.

I found Papa sitting by the open window, looking out upon the sea; watching the tall masts, and the ebbing waves, and the reddening glory of the sun. I sat down by him, and he said,—almost to himself, as if continuing the train of thought uppermost in his mind, 'How Gypsie loved the sea at Scarborough, and what a storm——' he shuddered; his thoughts had evidently gone back to that night when Gypsie had so nearly been drowned.

A thought struck me. I sat an instant in silence, and then I said, quietly, 'Papa, did you ever find out who it was who risked his life, and saved Gypsie's?'

He eagerly roused. 'No, never! how I wish I had! My boy, my boy! "would God I had died for thee, my son, my son!"'

He had never said so much to express his feelings since the wild wail of sorrow which fearfully broke the stillness of that death-chamber.

I laid my hand softly on his. 'There shall be "no more sea" where he is, Papa!'

'Gypsie, Gypsie!' was all the answer. It came from the depth of the strong man's heart.

I was very thankful; I longed for his sorrow sometimes to find relief in expression.

We sat silently. The clouds gathered crimson, and gold, and ruby; the parting sun shot up a radiance of glory which fell on sea and wave and shore; it folded the Earth in a garment of light; it lighted up the Heavens as

with a sea of fire. It faded, it sank, it passed away! So had passed away our Gypsie!

The room gathered shadows; a haze of dimness was stealing over the world. 'Papa! I know who saved Gypsie from a watery grave! who counted his own life nothing so that he might save your son's.'

He turned upon me fiercely—like his old self! I had not thought he would ever look like that again.

'You know, Maude; you know! and you never told me! This is like what you used to be; this is part of your old, wilful, obstinate——'

'Papa, Papa! hear me! I could not tell you. I dare not at first; I did not have the chance afterwards! you would not hear his name mentioned; I will tell you now.'

'*Now*,' he said, bitterly, 'it is too late, too late!'

'No, Papa, it is not too late. It was Edgar—my husband! he saved Gypsie. Papa, he loved Gypsie.'

'Leave me, Maude,' and I left him.

I waited outside his room for an hour; then I could wait no longer; I begged Aunt Gretta to go in. When she came out, she said he was not so well that evening; she had arranged all for the night, and he did not wish to be disturbed again.

It was an anxious, sleepless night to me, but the next morning Papa received me as usual, and made no remark about what had occurred the day before. Dr. Vanny came down the next day. He said I had done my duty well as a nurse, and might soon be dismissed. Mrs. Nilson would stay as general attendant for the present, and Mr. Retnor and Charlotte and their little girl were coming down the next week, and Charlotte intended to remain with Papa, and she and Aunt Gretta would be company enough for him. He thought that it was time that I went back to my husband, and he supposed that I thought so too. I had better write to see if Edgar could be spared for a day or two to come and

take me home. Home! as I thought of it, I realised how long I had been away from it! Dr. Vanny added that if Edgar came on Saturday, we should have Sunday all together, as he meant to stay until Monday, and Edgar and I could leave on that day too; so Edgar would only be away from his duties one day—Saturday being holiday—and Charlotte and Mr. Retnor would probably arrive on Tuesday.

He added,—'Maude, these last few months have more than exceeded my expectations, for I proposed my plan with many doubts and fears. Your father is better than I had ever thought he would be again. Gypsie's loss was almost a death-blow to him, but he has rallied, and I believe your little Gypsie will help to fill up the empty place in his heart. He has an unconquerable objection to returning to Stonecross since his boy's death; in fact, he has made up his mind that he will not, and, as you know, has offered Mr. Retnor the living, which Mr. Retnor has

accepted; he is to remove to the Hall; you need not wince, child; you have none such happy recollections of the place that you need look like that. There is a spot in the old Church dearer to all of us than any room in Stonecross Hall.'

There was a pause.

'The thing, Maude,' continued Dr. Vanny, 'is your father. My wish and advice is, that he and Aunt Gretta and Charlotte and her little girl, with Mrs. Nilson and a man-servant for attendants, spend the summer in travelling—Switzerland, or Italy, or Germany—where they like. I mentioned this plan to Mr. Retnor and Charlotte before I left, and they both inclined to it. Charlotte is anxious for complete change; she has felt her baby's death very much, and Mr. Retnor is willing she should go; he says that work has been so much neglected lately in the parish, that matters need his undivided attention and continuous effort.' Dr. Vanny shrugged his shoulders, 'What are you

smiling at, Maude? you ill-behaved girl! I think change of scene and climate will, in every sense, benefit your father. Aunt Gretta approves, and is already making mental arrangements as to luggage, and ways and means. The Hall will be closed for a time before Mr. Retnor and Charlotte take possession. It will be ready for them in the Autumn when Charlotte returns from abroad; Mr. Retnor will remain in his own house until then. I think this plan will suit all. What do you say, Maude?'

I thought it would; it seemed suitable in every way. It crossed my mind, as I sat gravely listening to Dr. Vanny, how strange it was for me to be consulted in family arrangements! I, who had never known what it was to be deferred to in the smallest matter, and had never been believed capable of having or holding an opinion worth listening to. I fancy Dr. Vanny must have guessed my thoughts; a lurking smile played about the corners of his mouth.

'You see it is a fine thing Maude, to be married and have a youngster! you are quite somebody, now-a-days.'

I smiled, but we were soon grave again. I saw Dr. Vanny had something on his mind yet to be said, but he hesitated about saying it.

'Dr. Vanny,' I said, 'is there anything else you wished to speak to me about?'

'Why—yes—there is, Maude, but I scarcely know how to begin; it is as yet merely an idea which has occurred to me. I should like to mention it to you, if I felt sure that you and your husband would be perfectly frank in expressing your opinion about it.'

'We will be that, indeed,' I said, 'if it is anything you wish us to consider.'

'I am not so sure about that,' he said; 'you have both of you a crotchet in your heads that it is your duty to do endless penance for past ill-deeds, and that to sacrifice your own comfort for all the future would be the best

thing you could do. It is this which makes me hesitate.'

'I think you give us more credit than we deserve,' I said, smiling rather sadly. 'What is it, Dr. Vanny, that you are thinking of?'

'Of your father,' he said, abruptly.

'But I do not understand you.'

'Where is he to live, Maude? Suppose he were to come and live with you and Edgar?'

I was positively speechless. With *us!* I could not receive the idea.

Dr. Vanny waited for some reply.

'Are you really in earnest, Dr. Vanny?' I said at last. 'You surely cannot have thought of what you propose! Papa would never consent to such a thing!'

'That is not the question I ask you,' he said; 'it is this—if he *were* willing, if his comfort would be secured by it, would you and Edgar be willing to make the great sacrifice—I speak advisedly—the great sacrifice? Would you be willing to give up your own

little home, where you have only yourselves, and keep the establishment which would be necessary, if your father did live with you ?'

'Papa would never hear of it,' was all I could say. 'Why, Dr. Vanny! Papa live with Edgar!'

'Maude,' said Dr. Vanny, very seriously, 'Dr. Maynard will never return to Stonecross ; the place is too intimately connected with Gypsie ; as time passes on, he may go and stay there with Charlotte and Mr. Retnor for a visit, but he will never live there again. This is certain ; and wherever he goes, all his wealth cannot buy him a daughter's care and love, but you can give it if you will, and if your husband will let you. Maggie is writing constantly to Aunt Gretta to go there and manage her house, for she is tired to death of housekeeping, and cannot be tied down to it, and I have no doubt her husband is tired too. I knew it would come to that ; a couple of fools always will be a couple of fools,

though they are brayed in a mortar with a pestle. I think your father's feelings have undergone a very remarkable change towards Mr. Farren since I was last here—more than I can account for, and which surprises me a good deal—and he is very fond of your little Gypsie. You would have to take a large house and keep a carriage for him, and have every luxury to which he has been accustomed. He must have his own suite of rooms, his own servants,—in fact, in a measure his own establishment. So far, there would be no interference with you and Edgar; you could live as you choose, but your father must have what is in accordance with his position and wealth. The social position thus established would do Edgar no harm. He is very anxious to kill himself with hard work, spare living, and Benedictine habits, and men might possibly think he was a little wrong in the head, if he be allowed to follow out his own ideas too closely; they will not be able to say so if your arrangements are as they must

be, in case Dr. Maynard reside with you; and Edgar can carry out his own whims as regards himself until he is all skin and bone; *that* makes no matter, so long as men don't guess the reason, eh, Maude?'

'But Papa?' I could not help repeating.

'I believe it would do your father good in every way. He has lived the lord of three villages until he is something of an autocrat. At Mannerton, he would soon have plenty of society, such as would do him good—men of learning, position, and talent; men his equals, whom he has not had at Stonecross—and he would see that all wisdom does not dwell with him alone. Dr. Long and he would renew the acquaintance of early days, and your father would gradually find Time not only a soother, but a healer. He would love Gypsie more and more; by some unaccountable means, I believe he has almost learnt to love your husband.'

I did not speak.

'It is a serious question,' said Dr. Vanny.

'I do not wonder at your surprise. There is plenty of time to think about it—six or eight months before he will settle down for the winter.'

'Does Papa——' I stopped.

'I have just hinted the matter to Dr. Maynard, but could do no more until I had spoken to you. I cannot think what has caused your father to change in his feelings so much towards Mr. Farren.'

Again I did not speak.

'Dr. Long writes me that he hopes your husband will one day take the place he now occupies, as Head Master. He is more interested than ever in him, since he has been an inmate of his house, and I shall not tell you what he says about him, because you think quite enough of him as it is. The position is worth, I understand, some fifteen hundred a year; but this is in the future; Edgar will need some years before he is ready for that. You are aware that the whole of your fortune, and your part of that

which would have been Gypsie's by his Mother's side, has been settled upon you and your children. Your father and I conjointly have done this, in compliance with your husband's earnest request, though I cannot say that I altogether approve of it. Did Edgar tell you of it?'

No, he had never told me anything about it; and I was bitterly grieved and angry at hearing of this arrangement.

'Well, well,' said Dr. Vanny, 'it's no use crying over spilt milk; you promised to obey your husband, and you must do it; he would have it so. It need make no real difference, as you will be able to appropriate the interest as you please.'

'And in case of my death?'

'In case of your death it will come to your children; but don't be troubled, Maude; we hope you are going to live to be a very old woman, and if Edgar takes crotchets into his head, you must let him have his own way.'

'Have I power to spend my income just as I like?'

'Of course you have—entire power. Spend it all in pomatum to put on his curly locks, if you choose.'

'Dr. Vanny!'

'Well, I won't teaze you; you are a good child, and you will love your husband all the more for having been a good daughter these five months. Now, go away and pack up your traps, and put the baby in the biggest box. And, Maude,—think over what I have said. The proposal to your father must come from you and Edgar. If Charlotte and Mr. Retnor raise objections, you have nothing to do with that; your father must do as he likes. Consult your own heart about it; consult your husband; above all—consult God.'

I did think it over. I thought of it night and day. Monday came; Edgar and I and Rawlins and baby were all ready to start. We had made up our minds; it was no little thing for Edgar to do; it was no light

struggle. It cost him his sleep by night, and his enjoyment by day.

On Monday morning I went alone to say 'good-bye' to Papa. He asked, 'Where is your child, Maude?' and I brought him. Papa took him,—looked earnestly at him, kissed him tenderly, put him back in my arms, and said,—'God bless little Gypsie.'

I took Gypsie away, and I went back. I knelt down before Papa.

'Papa! have you quite forgiven me all, —everything?'

'Everything, Maude.'

'And my husband?'

'Yes.'

'Papa, you say you will never live at Stonecross again. If we can make you happy, if you think us worthy of it,—will you make your home with us, when you return from abroad, and will you let me wait on you, and love you?'

There was a pause.

'Will you and Edgar have me; can you put up with me?'

'Papa, Papa!'

'Then I will come.'

Dr. Vanny went with us to the station. When Edgar took the tickets, Dr. Vanny called me into the waiting-room. 'So, Miss Maude,' he said, 'you think the old Doctor is not to be trusted with a secret, eh? Now, I know the reason of your father's change in his feelings towards Edgar. Well, never mind! Bless me, don't begin to look like that, child, or your husband will think I've been making you cry. And you need not be troubled about your fortune. I know enough to know that Edgar will be well provided for, whatever happen; and as it will come in the shape of a legacy from Gypsie, Edgar can have no choice. Here he comes. You were a good girl not to let the tears drop; they might have spoiled your jacket.'

Edgar and I arrived at Mannerton about eight o'clock that evening; Dr. and Mrs. Long met us. We drove home—to our own house, where Edgar had seen that all was in readiness for us.

The rooms looked just as we had left them. We might not have been away a day; we had been away five months!

I thought of that leaving, and compared it with our return, and Edgar and I knelt down and thanked God.

* * * * * * *

Now, it is New Year's Day. Papa and Edgar and Dr. Vanny—who has been spending Christmas with us—are out for their usual walk before dinner. Dr. and Mrs. Long are coming to dine with us. It is whispered in Mannerton that Dr. Long will soon be made a Bishop, but I hope that will not be for some time yet.

It is just two years the day before yesterday since we stood in the chancel of Stonecross Church, and laid our Gypsie there.

Papa has been with us fourteen months. It is pleasant—pleasant for Edgar's sake—to have a beautiful house and gardens and plenty of servants; but over the fire at night we often talk of our little house near the School, and all that happened there. Perhaps we might have found it inconveniently small now, as Gypsie's baby-sister has come; and although she is only three months old, she makes far more commotion in the house than ever her brother did; and her nurse is such a grand person, she certainly would never have put up with our tiny nursery. She thinks it quite proper that the little Madeleine should be accommodated with the best of everything.

And Edgar is working still,—even though so much wealth and luxury surround us. True to his resolution, he is paying off every penny of that fatal two hundred by his own personal work. It will soon be done, and I never try to make him alter, because I know it would be perfectly useless.

Rawlins left us before we removed — having cast in her lot with 'No. 35'—the man who had driven Rawlins and me our first drive in Mannerton, and who then Rawlins declared to me to be 'extremely civil and very good-looking!' It must have been love at first sight! He was a widower with two children, when he persuaded Rawlins to become his second wife. Rawlins is very happy; her only grief on getting married being the parting from 'Master Gypsie.' Since then 'No. 35' has been promoted to the rank of our coachman, and has proved to be most efficient and steady. They live at the Lodge, so Rawlins can see Gypsie and baby Maude every day, which quite reconciles her to the change she has made.

Mrs. Nilson is my factotum. She is head-housekeeper, head-nurse, head-manager, —superintendent-in-general. I have had two rooms fitted up for her, and I hope she is happy with us; she says she is. She is

never to leave us, and I have taken care that she be provided for in any case.

Aunt Gretta is with Maggie. Maggie says she cannot live without her, and probably she could not, as the exertion of looking after her house might prove too much for her. But we insisted on having Aunt Gretta for a long visit in the summer, and when we were at Hastings in the autumn, Maggie and her husband, and Aunt Gretta, joined us there.

Papa visited Stonecross in the summer, and stayed a month with Charlotte and Mr. Retnor. Next year, I think he will stay longer. His grief is becoming more chastened and healthy.

By Mamma's monument is now another, —pure, white Carrara marble; and on it the words,—

GYPSIE MAYNARD:

ÆTAT 8.

"And Jesus called a little child unto Him."

Edgar has just come in. I showed him my old book, and how I had finished this long entry, and I told him I had done with it now; domestic cares were growing so heavy that I could not write any more. But Edgar says that I am not to put it away altogether; that he would like me to write in it now and then, and like it to be at hand for us sometimes to look into. 'When events happen, Maude,' he said, 'we think we can never forget them; we believe they have impressed themselves upon our hearts so deeply, so ineffaceably, that no after events can dislodge them. We are mistaken. With each roll, the wave of Time rubs off a little and a little,—the impression becomes fainter and fainter, until at last we are left with only a memory, and know not from whence it springs, or how we came by it. So changeable is every human feeling. Our past is full of lessons;—its warnings are so signal, and its mercies are so great. And our future is so hidden! Who knows what form of

temptation may not lie before us? Keep your book at hand, Maude, to help us on the way. We will put directions upon it to be burnt; so that whichever of us goes first, the other can destroy it; and if we go together—as I pray God we may—it will be destroyed for us.'

THE END.

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